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# POCKET NOVELS



## The Swamp Riders.





THE SHAWNEE LIBRARY

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# THE SWAMP RIDERS;

OR,

## THE BLACKSMITH OF CAMDEN.

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BY GEORGE DARCY GILBERT.

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# THE SWAMP RIDERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE VILLAGE SMITH.

THE sun was going down, and the village of Camden was still in a bustle. They had good reason for being unquiet on that day, for the town was full of British troops, scattered about in groups leaning on their sabers, or standing with hands folded in front, after the manner of soldiers at rest. They were dragoons, mostly Irish and English, heavily armed and equipped. They were a part of the troop of Major Darnier, a noted English leader, under Tarleton.

It was at the period in the history of the Revolution when every thing looked dark for the colonies. Some of the inhabitants had been forced to take "protections." Others still were in the swamps and woods, hunted like beasts of the forest. A passing glance at the faces of the people of Camden would have showed the most casual looker-on that the South Carolinians bore the presence of these men very ill, and would have done any thing in their power to drive them out. But, the Whigs knew their own weakness, and that it was not policy at this time to notice the insolence of the British.

The village smithy stood upon the principal street, and the rapid sound of hammers, together with the number of horses tethered before the door, showed that the smith was busy. The doors were open, and revealed a number of men standing within the shop. One of these was the smith—a man of stalwart build, over six feet in height, with the brawn and muscles of a giant of old. As he raised his hammer to strike a blow, the great ridges of his knotted muscles stood out like cords.

The face of the smith was an index of power, while the good-natured smile which played about his lips showed that,



like most powerful men, he was a jolly fellow. His black hair, cut close to his head, was grimed with smoke and soot. His arms, bared to the shoulder, were brown and hard. He might have been forty years of age.

"Strike, Dan Maloney. Strike, while the iron is hot!" he cried to his assistant.

"Sure an' ain't I strikin' the very heart out av me body?" said the attendant, in a rich brogue which could only come from an Irish mouth. "There!"

The sparks flew from the iron as the heavy sledge descended. The smith's assistant was a son of the "gem av the say," and a great character in his way. He had one of those peculiarly droll, irresistible faces which we so often see in members of his nation—a rollicking, devil-may-care expression which was both shrewd and fun-loving. His red hair bristled like quills, and was stained and streaked with soot, giving an additional charm to this feature. He was further beautified by a streak of soot reaching from the corner of his eye to his chin. His face was freckled, and altogether, Dan Maloney could hardly be called a beauty. Yet he was a strongly-built fellow, and would not have been the easiest man in the world to put down in a struggle, as many of the wrestlers in Camden could testify.

"A good theory that of yours, blacksmith," said one of the loungers in the shop. "'Strike while the iron is hot.' That is what I say to the commanders. Give these knaves no rest; follow them with sharp iron and a bloody spear wherever they go, and the war will be over in a twelvemonth."

"You think so, major?" said the smith. "And yet the boys in the swamps are a healthy set of lads, not easy put down. Bring in that sorrel hoss, Dan. We'll shoe him next. I was saying these chaps in the swamps are the most opinionated set of fellows you ever see. To hear 'em talk, you'd think they liked to fight the troopers better than to eat a hearty meal. I don't reckon they're right, though!"

"Nonsense," said the major. "They melt before our fellows like ice before the sun. They can't stand the push of the bayonets."

"That mout be true ag'in. But, did it ever occur to you, Major Darnier, that it ain't reasonable to expect them to stand



up ag'in' bayonets, unlest they have bayonets too? That's what I'm a-studyin' on."

"They had bayonets at Camden battle-field," replied the major.

"So they did, major—at least the Marylanders did, and they do say they mowed a most etarnal swath. 'Tain't no use to talk. The Continentals stood up well. Give the devil his due."

The major turned his handsome face angrily toward the speaker. The British officer was young, and had one of those faces which God seldom gives to man—a face almost feminine in its contour, but with a stern look about the lips which spoke of manhood too. Few men in the British army could boast of greater accomplishments than he. In his school days he had dabbled in every thing a little. He could sketch quickly and well, sing in a brilliant tenor, read almost any European language, and talk upon any subject. One would have thought him but a drawing-room soldier until they had seen him in battle. There he was another man. A sort of fierce fury seemed to take possession of him, and he raged like a very fiend. The people of the Carolinas had good cause to know him, for he had harried the borders many a time and oft.

"Sir smith," said he, "are you a rebel?"

"You'd better ask my neighbors than me. I mout not give you a true answer. Come, major, you know me well enough, and you know that Tom Matthews can't be skeered. I'm stayin' here in Camden, minding my own business and letting other people enjoy the same blessin'. I know'd a man that got rich by it onc't."

"Then don't uphold the traitors in my presence, or you may chance to get into trouble. I know that there is more disaffection in this district than our people dream of. You had better take care."

"Thank ye for the caution. Would you like this foot cut down here? The man that shoed this hoss ought to be hung. One of these *army* farriers—I know the breed well. They ain't got no feelin' for hoss-flesh. Give me that knife, Dan. What are you staring at? If you don't mend your ways poety soo you'll git in a wuss diffikilty than I ever was, consarn it."

"You are independent, Mr. Matthews."



"Yes, rayther so. It runs in the breed. None of us are likely to stand any nonsense, no matter from whenc't it comes. I don't know whether you ever found it out, but we of the south have a kind of sneaking notion that we are as good as any Englishman that ever trod the sile."

"Whoop!" said Dan Maloney. "It's talkin' ye are, Masther Tom! Sure ye mind me av the time when I was in England. That's the fine place for a poor man to live. Plenty to ate an drink—av ye can get it—an' sorra the sup av throuble at all. Arrah, but its a fine life we live unther the good King Jarge."

"I doubt whether you believe that, my fine man. Ah! who is this?"

A gentleman had ridden into the village and was seated in the saddle, taking a leisurely survey of the town. He was a young man, in a plain civilian dress, wearing only sword and pistols as weapons of defense. His face was handsome, and had a proud look in it. The frame was well-knit, though not large, and he looked like a gentleman born. His dark eyes roved over the place, and then he slipped out of the saddle at the door of the smithy.

"My horse has cast a shoe, blacksmith," he said. "Do me the favor to attend to it as soon as possible."

Matthews gave one glance at the speaker, nodded an affirmative and then bent over his work, whistling. The young man walked back to the village tavern and sat down upon the veranda. Darnier gave a meaning glance at his companions, and lounged out after him. When he reached the tavern he found the stranger seated, and looking carelessly about him while he trifled with a glass at his elbow, which contained excellent Madeira. He looked at Darnier, as he came up, with the cool, passing glance which strangers give each other, and continued his abstracted survey of the village. The troopers were idling up and down, in an aimless manner, staring at ladies who passed, and uttering compliments or derision, as it pleased their fancy.

"A traveler, I presume," said Darnier, beginning a conversation with the stranger. "I am Major Darnier, of his majesty's —— dragoons. Did you come from above?"

"Yes," replied the stranger, who did not seem disposed to be communicative.



"How did you find the country?"

"Severely dealt by," replied the stranger. "I saw once happy homes in ruins. I saw where peaceful hamlets once stood, only solitary chimneys and blackened walls. It is no pleasant thing to ride through the Northern districts."

"These Whigs have done great wrong to the Carolinas," said the officer. "It is their fault. If property is burned in the North, it is because the inhabitants have given aid and comfort to rebels."

"And that is their punishment? It is rather hard to bear. Understand me, sir. I am a Carolinian, not adopted, but born on the soil. I am proud of this country. I believe in its future greatness, and it offends me to the soul to see these things go on."

"Why do not these rebels yield, then?"

"Who knows?" said the stranger, bitterly. "I have heard them argue thus: 'This is too great a country to bend under the yoke of any foreign power whatever. We have resources within ourselves, so great that we need not depend upon the mother country for subsistence.' These men will say to you, 'Can England show an expanse of territory like ours? Such rivers, such lakes, such vast resources in forest and field? Then why should we be subject to her?' These are their arguments. You of course know how wrong they are. *Any* Englishman knows that."

"It seems strange to me that any young man of spirit should not have taken sides either in one way or the other before this time," said Darnier.

"Perhaps I have no spirit," said the stranger. "It does not matter."

"Allow me to ask your name."

"Certainly. Charles Surrey."

"Where do you reside?"

"I am a Chesterfield man, and am riding to Charleston. What is the likelihood of peace?"

"Very good. I hope before the summer ends to see at least the Southern colonies subjected."

"That word sounds strangely to me," said Surrey. "Subjected! Then you think the Northern colonies will succeed in establishing themselves?"



"Yes. Their obstinate, bull-headed tenacity has met its reward. I am afraid they are safe from us. It was a satisfaction to give one of their heroes a drubbing here."

"Gates, you mean."

"Yes."

"An overrated man. It was more the result of good conduct on the part of his Generals than his own merit, which forced the surrender of Burgoyne. Which way do you go?"

"I am traveling in search of a scoundrel who is giving us infinite trouble—one of these Will-o'-the-wisp riders of the South. His name is Conyers. That is, after I have taken this train to its destination."

"I have heard of Conyers."

"He has a small force—I would not undertake to say how many—and with these he made a dash at a convoy the other day, cut them to pieces and captured the train—eight wagons loaded with the very articles we most need. It is shameful. Why, he took among other things about one hundred sabers for my troop. I will have revenge, if only for that. By the way, you are a loyalist, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said the young man. "If I were not I hardly think I would be apt to trust myself in the hands of Major Darnier."

The major smiled grimly.

"I am not the best man in the world to be at enmity with," he said. "I was going to ask you a question. Do you know any thing of this blacksmith? He is the most impudent scoundrel I ever saw. Is he a Whig?"

"I know but very little of the man," replied Surrey. "Having merely employed him at times when passing through Camden, I could hardly be expected to know him very well. He is noted for his immense strength, I have heard."

"He looks it fully," said Darnier. "I would give a large amount to have him in my troop. I believe the fellow could handle a broadsword well."

"No doubt he could," said the other, turning aside his head. "He has broad shoulders enough. He has the drollest Irishman for an assistant you ever saw. A perfect specimen of his race."

"I thought so. His brogue is peculiarly rich. But what an acquisition Matthews would be to a troop of horse."



"He would indeed."

"My blacksmith loses me more horses in a year than his head is worth. I would hang him with pleasure if this Matthews would consent to join me. We are having hard service here. What lady is that, I wonder?"

"I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance," replied the other, frowning.

"She certainly rides well. I will say for your Carolina ladies that they are excellent equestriennes. This one has an ease and grace in the saddle which— Where the devil has he gone?"

The stranger had placed one hand upon the rail of the veranda and bounded into the street. Looking that way, Darnier saw the reason. Some of his younger officers, who had been drinking freely, had barred the way of the lady who had passed them while on the veranda, and were accosting her with drunken familiarity. She paused irresolutely and drew rein. The boldest of the half-drunken party laid his hand upon the bridle and detained her.

"'Seuse me, miss," he said. "'This is er king's highway. Anybody knows er king's highway is er—king's highway, of course. Why don't you say something, Bilton. Don't ye see I'm stuck?"

"Take your hand from the bridle," said the lady, in a clear, ringing tone. "Fool!"

"Eh?" said the officer. "Fool! You heard her, Tracy; so did you, Bilton. Take note of it. She called me a fool."

"She—she's a female of discernment," stuttered Bilton. "She knew Curry in a moment. Oh, good gracious, don't bother, woman. Take away that vail. That's what we want. You may be a disguised rebel."

The lady tore away her vail with an angry gesture and flung it on the ground. At the same moment a light figure bounded to the side of her horse, and the concussion of two heavy bodies immediately followed. These bodies were those of Bilton and Curry, who had dropped under two heavy blows delivered by young Surrey. Having done this, he drew his sword, and placing himself in front of the lady, said, coolly:

"Who next?"



## CHAPTER II.

MAUD CARROLL.

THERE was a moment's pause, for there was something in the attitude of Surrey which showed that he was not a man to be trifled with. His dark eyes gleamed with passion, and he clutched his sword-hilt in a convulsive grasp, like one prepared for the worst. Bilton and Curry rose completely sobered—one with the blood trickling from his forehead, between the eyes, and the other with a large black lump beginning to develop itself, directly behind the ear. Both drew their swords and attacked Surrey. But he stood like a rock, warding off their thrusts with the ease and grace of a practiced swordsman, and calling out to the others to interfere.

"Down with the rebel dog!" roared Curry, who had suffered most in the encounter. "I will make him ask pardon on his knees."

They assailed him again, while the major came up slowly with a smile upon his face, evidently in no hurry to interfere.

"I warn you," said Surrey, parrying a thrust in tierce from the blade of Bilton, "one of you will be hurt. You had better take refuge in the smithy, miss."

She did not move, and a close combat began. In a moment Bilton had lost his sword, and was slightly wounded in the sword-arm below the elbow, while Curry was overmatched. He shouted to the others to come to his aid, and forgetting all ideas of honor, two more threw themselves forward, sword in hand. The lady uttered a scream of terror, as she saw young Surrey overmatched. But he drew a long-bladed knife from his bosom, and holding it in his left hand, used it to parry some of the thrusts he received. But it could not last long at such odds, and he was giving way, when a great shout was heard, and the blacksmith rushed out of the smithy, followed by the Irishman, each carrying a heavy sledge in his hand. They broke through the crowd and gained the side of young Surrey, encouraged by the citizens who had assembled, some



of whom were already drawing their swords. The major saw that his time had come, and he sprung forward. Matthews had just leveled a blow at Curry which would have crushed his skull if he had not interposed his sword-blade. As it was, the weapon was broken in his hand, and he was stretched, breathless and bleeding, on the sod. It was at this moment that Darnier sprung between, and cried out to them to pause.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried. "Are you all mad?"

"You are somewhat tardy in your interference, Major Darnier," said Surrey, lowering his blade. "Soul of my body, man, do you think I will stand by and see a lady insulted by your drunken officers?"

"Drunken!" roared Bilton.

"Be silent, fool," replied Surrey. "If you had not been drunk I would have killed you. What? Are we sunk so low that our ladies can be assailed by such things as these, in open day? Do you wonder that the colonies have rebelled?"

"You are somewhat hasty, sir," said Darnier. "I will attend to my officers. To your quarters, gentlemen. Death of my life, it is such things as this which go to prolong the rebellion. Your conduct shall be reported at head-quarters, and if you do not lose your commissions, I am much mistaken. Excuse me, miss. I hope you are not injured."

"Not in the slightest degree," she said, coldly, turning her face toward him. "I will trouble you no longer."

It was a beautiful face, a little browned by exposure to the Southern sun, but faultless in its contour. Her hair, which curled in profusion, was suffered to drop upon her shoulders in rich masses, shrouding her body like a mantle. Her face, now flushed with excitement, looked more beautiful than ever. Having seen that face, the major had a better excuse for being indignant.

"Take up Lieutenant Curry," said he, addressing some of the men. "I hope he is dead. He richly deserves it, and Matthews shall not be punished."

"That's kind, any way," said the blacksmith, with a snort of defiance. "If you think any man, be he lieutenant or General, can insult any of our ladies about here, especially Miss Maud, then you are mistaken. That I tell you plain. No



nonsense, now. Do any more of you want any thing? If ye do I can accommodate you. Come; try it on."

Nobody moved.

"Sorrah take the day," howled Dan. "An' ain't I going to get a lick in somewhere? Arrah, musha, to the divil wid the luck! Don't you want a taste, misther man? Nor you; nor you? Bad 'cess til ye, an' til the likes av ye, thin. It's little good's to be got out av a lot av half-hearted bla'g'ards. It's yersilfs is that same. Whoo! I'm the b'y for a fight."

"Oh, shet up, Dan Maloney. Don't talk so much. I'm glad they ain't hurt ye, Miss Maud," cried Blacksmith Tom. "If they had, why, Lord love your heart alive, I wouldn't have left a grease-spot of 'em. No, I wouldn't."

"Allow me to apologize, as far as a mere apology can go, for the inexcusable conduct of my officers," said Darnier. "Believe me, no one can regret more sincerely than I do, the fact that such an outrage has been committed by any member of my troop."

"It is not necessary to multiply words about it, Major Darnier," said Charles Surrey. "I am ashamed to think that such men hold commissions in your service. You and I understand it. Not one among you but would make it a quarrel to the death if a like insult were offered to an English lady in any of the towns in which you are quartered. You rank us such contemptible creatures that we will tamely submit to any outrage; but, by heaven, we will not."

"You are excited, Mr. Surrey, and for that reason I will overlook your intemperate language. But, let us have no more of the same sort."

The blacksmith touched the young man on the arm and whispered in his ear. He nodded in reply, and turned to the lady, who was trying to get her horse out of the press. "Make a way for the lady," said he. Dan and the blacksmith at once advanced with their hammers, and the crowd fell back before them and the lady rode on. Charles Surrey walked by the side of her horse until she was quite out of the crowd, and then paused.

"Have you far to go?" he said. "Are you quite sure you will not fear to ride on now?"

"No, thank you. Let me take this opportunity of saying



to you that I am sincerely grateful for your manly conduct, and hope some day to be able to thank you as you deserve. May I know your name?"

"A moment. Walk on a little further. Have you a pencil? I am called Charles Surrey here. Are you a Whig?"

"Heart and soul."

"That accounts for this outrage. Let me meet one of those fellows in a proper place, and I will give him well-deserved punishment. We are coming to a sad pass if such things can be done with impunity. Have you a pencil?"

She had one hanging at her girdle, which she took off and handed to him. He wrote a few words upon a small piece of paper and handed it to her. She gave a violent start as she saw what was written, and a quick flush mounted into her beautiful face.

"Is it possible?" she said. "How dare you come here?"

"Oh, as to that, I am not well known in Camden," he replied. "Only three men know my real character and mission, and you might burn them with hot irons, place them on the rack, torture them in any and every conceivable way, and they would not reveal what they know. I think we had better part here."

"Not until I have thanked you," she said, softly.

His face flushed.

"We have come upon strange times indeed if we of Carolina will refuse to strike a blow for the safety of our women. May my arm be palsied when that day comes to me."

"Hear, hear!" said Blacksmith Tom, who was following. "That's the talk."

"Sure, an' he's a b'y afther me own heart," said Dan. "Let's be goin' back, masther. There's many a shoe to be set afore mornin'. We'll have to work all night."

"Stay," said the lady. "I have not thanked you."

"You try it on if you dare, Miss Maud, and see what will come of it."

"It won't do," said Dan. "Sure, an' don't ye know it's the delight an' glory av an Irishman to get intil a fight? Av ye don't know it, I'll tell it til ye now. I'm sp'ilin' for a row. This was a small bitteen av a one; maybe by-an-by we can



get up a betther. Good-night, Miss Maud. Good-night, yer 'anner. Come along, mather dear."

Blacksmith Tom bade them good-by, and heaving up the heavy sledge to his shoulder, walked away with his assistant. Charles was left with the lady upon the highway.

"You see yonder white house, just visible through the trees, upon the hill?" said she. "That is my residence. My name is Maud Carroll, and my father is an old resident of this district."

"Judge Carroll?" he asked.

"The same. Do you know him?"

"I wonder how many in this section do not know him? I have seen him in court a number of times. I did not tell you that the law is my profession. Let me ask a favor of you. Do not mention my name to your father."

"I could hardly do that if I would," she said. "My father is in Europe, and is compelled to stay there the remainder of the year. I am truly sorry that he can not be here to thank you. Do you stay long in Camden?"

"It is impossible to say."

"But you must find time to call upon us. Remember that the house is open to you at any time, though it seems to me, considering the danger you are in, you ought not to stay longer in the village than you can help."

"I shall try to see you before I go," he said. "As for danger, we can find it anywhere, but I think the cause in which I am engaged the worthiest in which a man ever drew sword."

"It is, indeed," she said. "We part here, then. Can you not call to-night?"

"I am sorry to say that it will be impossible. I will find work enough for to-night."

"Then to-morrow be it. It is a sad thing that the upholders of such a cause must do their work in darkness."

"They will soon do it in the broad blaze of day," he said, proudly. "I give you good-day."

They parted, and he walked moodily back toward the village. On the way they were met by Bilton, one of the officers he had knocked down. Bilton was a heavy, dark-browed fellow, with a look of malice in his face, which made it hide-



ous. The natural ugliness of his countenance was not beautified by the mark which Surrey's fist had left upon his forehead.

"You think you have done well, my fine lad," he said. "No man ever insulted Walter Bilton yet, who was not, in one way or another, made to repent it. Now, listen to me. For some reason or other the major will not overlook this little affair. He was not wont to be so squeamish. I come to warn you that, in case I am broken of my commission, I will kill you."

"Thank you," said Surrey. "Now get out of my way."

"Not so fast, my lad. I came out to talk to you, and I mean to do it. I have my eye on you, and I say you are a suspicious man. You are a soldier, at all events. No man ever handled a sword as you do who was not used to it."

"You do me great honor. What do you deduce from this fact?"

"Simply that you are not what you seem."

"That is strange. Allow me to pass on. Death, man! get out of my way!"

"If, as I say, I lose my commission for this act, I will dog you night and day until I have your life. Be warned in time, and say a good word for me to the major."

"If you come within reach of my arm while I stay in Camden, I will horsewhip you as sure as my name is Surrey."

Thrusting the man rudely aside, Surrey passed him and again entered the village. The crowd had broken up into knots, and all were eagerly discussing the affair. The ringing sound of hammers in the smithy warned the young man that Blacksmith Tom was still at work, and he entered. Tom stopped as he saw who had come in, and smeared his bare arm across his brow to wipe off the perspiration, while he greeted Surrey with a nod.

"Is that fellow you knocked down, dead?" said Surrey.

"Far from it," said Tom. "More's the pity. It's sech chaps as them that make our burdens heavier. They're natural born Englishmen, them two. Now listen to me: there's a good many English that's good men. I know it, for I've worked for 'em. It stands to reason. We are of the same



blood. But, that ain't it; the good don't balance the bad. That's whar the shoe pinches."

"Now look til me," said Dan. "I was born an' brid unther the government av Great Britain, an' phat I say is, the divil fly away wid 'em, King Jarge an' all. It's poor ould Ireland that always gets the worst av it. Look out til that party av dragoons. Who are the most av thim? Irish! An' d'ye think thim chaps care to fight ag'in' the Continentals? The divil a bit. Look til me ag'in. Av they was to get intil a fight now, this minnit, they'd fight the best they know how. An' phy? Beca'se an Irishman likes to be throe til his colors. That's the r'ason av it. Throe blood will tell. They've lived an' fought so long unther the red cross, that they don't know any other. An' yit it's a hard cross til them."

"You are right, Dan," said the blacksmith. "But don't blurt it out so loud. Who knows but some of 'em are crawlin' around the house? It wouldn't take much to bring 'em on us after to-night's work. It's got to come soon."

"On the whole, I hope this scoundrel will not die," said the young man. "It might get you into trouble, and if the reports I hear of you are true, we need you here."

"What d'ye mean?"

Surrey came close to him and whispered. The face of Blacksmith Tom lighted up wonderfully, and he grasped the hand of the speaker fervently.

"Hush, hush!" whispered Surrey. "Be careful; you will endanger my safety."

"I knowed you was comin'," said Tom, "but I didn't think to see you so soon. When is it to be?"

"To-night."

"Where shall I meet you?"

"Come to the tavern about nine o'clock. Make an excuse to come to my room, and I will tell you my plan. Above all things, remember that my name is Surrey."

The blacksmith gave him a meaning look, and went on with his work. Surrey returned to the tavern.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE BRAWL AT THE GEORGE.

THERE were two taverns in Camden at this time, situated upon opposite sides of the street, between whose landlords there was the usual rivalry in trade, heightened by the fact that while one of them was a firm and consistent loyalist, the other was more than suspected of being of Whig proclivities. The George, the hotelrie occupied by the Whig landlord, old Ben Channing, as he was called, or, more frequently, "Uncle Ben," was by far the better hotel, although his custom had dropped off woefully since the war. Even those who, in secret, held the same views as Uncle Ben, dared not be seen too much at a suspected house. But, to-day, on account of the number of guests in town, both hotels were full to overflowing, and nearly all the officers, attracted by the neat appearance of the George, had put up at that inn, much to the anger of the host of the Queen, on the other side of the street, who stood upon his veranda, muttering curses at his neighbor, and at the bad taste of the officers, who preferred to quarter with a "d—d Whig," in preference to staying with a good loyalist.

As Charles ascended the steps of the George, he became satisfied that he was the object of close scrutiny on the part of a group of officers, who were seated at one end of the veranda. Giving them a single quick glance, he discovered that most of them had been in the drunken party who had insulted Maud Carroll that evening. He sat down upon a settle near the door, playing with the tassel of his sword-belt, and watching the movements of the dragoons, who were roaming vaguely up and down, evidently desirous of doing mischief somewhere, but at a loss how to begin. Charles Surrey kept his eye on them, and without appearing to do so, maintained a strict watch upon the movements of the officers on the veranda. The landlord brought him a glass of wine, and whispered to him that he had better go into the house, as he did not like the look of the young red-coats on the veranda.



"Do you think I fear them, Uncle Ben?" said the young man, in the same tone. "Not I! I was not trained in that way."

"No excuse for being foolhardy, boy. If you were to lose your life in an affray with these fellows—"

"Then 'Harry Hotspur is cold,' Uncle Ben," replied the young man, laughingly. "Go in, go in, my old friend. Trust me to get well out of this."

Uncle Ben shook his head, and went into the house, muttering to himself. Charles remained in the same position, indolently sipping his wine. Shortly after, the party of officers was joined by Bilton. They evidently had been waiting for him, for directly upon his arrival, an insolent conversation began to pass about the circle.

"I tell you," said Bilton, "that I never saw a woman in this country but was secretly pleased when any notice was taken of her by a British officer. It is no more than just. They have been used to being squired about by these country bumpkins, and when they see an officer, in a neat uniform, they can't resist."

"To be sure," said another. "Such fellows as they are, too! Great, hulking, hob-nailed boors, it really is a shame that such creatures should be permitted to exist outside of a menial's place. And some of their women are undeniably good-looking; upon my word, they are. I know a good many in Charleston who are positively lovely. Look at the Herveys. Did you ever see the equal of Moll?"

"Not until to-day," said Bilton. "This girl about whom we had this row to-day was far ahead of her, and I really meant to take some notice of her; I did, indeed."

Charles rose slowly and walked toward the party. There was a suppressed devil in his eye, which boded no good to the insolent ruffian, who evidently had talked with the intention of drawing him out as much as possible.

"I made a remark to you a few minutes ago," said Surrey, quietly. "Let me remind you of it. I told you I should horsewhip you if you came in my way. I will keep my word to the letter."

One of the young officers held a heavy riding-whip in his hand. Snatching it suddenly, the young man seized Bilton



by the collar, and holding him in a vice-like grasp, rained a succession of heavy blows upon him. The castigation was as terrible as even this scoundrel merited, and when he had completed it, Surrey threw him off by a quick movement, and drew his sword. Bilton fell heavily to the floor, and lay groaning.

Over his prostrate body, mad with rage at his treatment of their companion, rushed the young officers. Surrey made a sudden spring, and got his back so near the wall that while his elbow had free play they could not get behind him. The lights from the open doors and windows made it easy to see, and the sharp clash of steel, for the second time that day, woke the echoes of the little street.

His defense was beautiful. You could hardly see his wrist move, but yet, as the keen point swept from side to side, it formed a perfect guard against the three blades bent against him; for the veranda was not wide enough to allow more than that number to attack him at once. His pliant wrist, strong as steel, did all the work. Two of the assailants were already wounded, and had fallen back, and yet Charles Surrey stood firm.

"Come on, there, the pack of you! Cowards all, is not six to one enough for you? You scoundrels, I will teach you how to fence."

"Cut him down!" hissed Bilton. "Why do you let him live?"

"Hold on!" said a steady voice.

They turned to the window. Uncle Ben stood there, his gray hair floating back in the evening breeze, holding a gun to his shoulder.

"Now listen to me, men. I am an old man, and I ain't likely to have much more time to live; but I'll live longer than the man who strikes the next blow. This is my house, and as sure as my name is Uncle Ben Channing, just so sure I'll shoot the first man who lifts a hand."

They knew that he meant it, and began to parley. But he cut them short.

"You put up your swords, I say. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Six to one! That ain't fair."

"I'll have his blood yet," said Bilton.



"You must call him out," said one of the others. "There is no other way. If you do not, to Coventry you go."

"I can't fight him," said Bilton. "He is more than a match for me."

"I seek no unfair advantage," said the young American, "and to give Lieutenant Bilton the choice of weapons, as he seems to desire it, I challenge him. If he does not accept, I call upon you all to post him through the British army as a coward of the first water. What do you say?"

"I accept," cried Bilton, eagerly. "I refer you to Captain Luther."

"I must find a second," said the other. "And in good time, here he comes."

It was Blacksmith Tom who hurried up the steps. He held in each hand a heavy horseman's pistol, and was, as usual, closely followed by his henchman, Dan Malony. They had heard of the fray while at work, and had left every thing to hurry down to see about it. They at once threw themselves between the group of officers and the young American.

"Have they hurt you, Mr. Surrey?" cried the blacksmith. "If they have, say the word, and I will shoot the one that did it."

"No harm is done, Tom," said Surrey. "I have horse-whipped our worthy friend Bilton, and a challenge is the consequence. You will go aside with Captain Luther and make the arrangements. I only stipulate that it shall come off to-morrow morning, and not before. I have had enough of sword-play for one day."

"Don't you believe he means to try you with the sword," said the blacksmith. "Far from it; he knows better. Now, Captain Luther."

An officer who had taken no part in the fray, turned at the word.

"I refuse to act," he said.

"And why?" said Bilton, biting his lip.

"Because I should have no confidence in my principal. He might show the white feather at the moment of joining issue. Find some other person, I beg."

"I will call upon you to answer this, Captain Luther," hissed Bilton.



"At any time and place you may see fit to call upon me, I shall be quite at your service in that respect," said Luther, with a look of scorn. "I tell you all, young men, you are disgracing yourselves and the service. In the first place, you insulted a lady, and this gentleman took her part, as any gentleman should do. In this instance I heard you direct insolent reflections at the ladies of this country and the gentlemen—mind, I say *gentlemen*—of this country. Who can blame him for taking the measures he did to stop it?"

"Sir," said Charles, advancing, "will you allow me to shake you by the hand, and express a hope that we may become better acquainted?"

"I am proud to do so. I am Captain William Luther, of the —— dragoons. I shall be happy to meet you at any time."

Several of the young fellows who had acted without thought, began to wish that they had not followed the lead of Bilton in the affair.

"We've got into the scrape together," said one reckless ensign, "and I'll see you through it, Bilton. Come, blacksmith, let us arrange the affair."

They walked aside, conversed for a moment, and came back.

"I'll go to your room and talk it over with you," said Tom.

"It is all arranged. Come along, Dan. I want you."

They went up together, and Tom barred the door. This done, he sat down on the edge of the bed, and looked at Charles with a glance of mingled anger and pride.

"You will go and mix yourself up with free fights, in spite of all I can do, Charley. If I was to serve you right, do you know what I would do?"

"No."

"I'd take an' give you a butt right under the ear. If any man ever deserved it, you do. It would just sarve you right. Here you've been and mixed yourself up with a duel. What call had you to go and fight six or eight men?"

"If you had heard their insults, directed at the country we love so well, you would have blamed me for not drawing sword. I am not a quarrelsome man by nature, Tom, but these fellows are more insolent than any class of men I ever saw in my life. They think they have us down, and can



afford to insult us as much as they like. I will not stand by and see it done."

"I s'pose they *did* provoke you, young 'un," said the other, reflectively. "It's in 'em to do it. Well, we have made this arrangement. You fight to-morrow at sunrise. Before that time, I take it, you will have made a change in affairs in Camden."

"I hope so."

"How you can afford to risk your life in a duel, I can't see," said the blacksmith. "If you should be killed, what a loss it would be!"

"If I must tell you the truth about the affair, I do not think the fellow will fight. I may not be right in my estimate of him, but I think him a consummate coward."

"That may be true," said the blacksmith. "But you must take a number of things into consideration, and you will see that it is absolutely forced upon him. In the first place, you have knocked him down once and horsewhipped him to-night. You have given up your right to the choice of weapons by challenging him, after giving him the right to challenge you. That was a foolish move. They would have forced him to challenge you—he must have done it or left the army—and you could have run him through the body quietly, and so made an end of him."

"I want no advantage over the fellow," said Surrey. "I will take my chances."

"A willful man must have his way," said the other, quietly. "Now that the matter is decided on, we come to our own business. A curse upon these red-coats! How they swarm over this fair land of ours! I hear this Rhode Island blacksmith is making a good General."

"He certainly is. I never thought it of him. Do you know that a man who is skillful in retreat is nearly as good as a man who is skillful in battle? Greene saves his men. He retreats, to be sure. But he has his face to the enemy. Ah, if he had led us at the Camden fight, it might have been different."

"I wasn't there, you know. Ha-ha! If these fellows below knew who and what you really are, and what I have done, how quickly they would prepare the cord and find a tree."



"It's a fine pair ye are, any way," said Dan, who had said nothing up to this point. "Wouldn't ye look illegant intirely hangin' on a limb, wid a fine rope about yer necks?"

"And with you on the next branch, Dan. We are in the ssme boat," said Tom.

"Troth an' ye may well say that," said Dan. "Don't stay talking. Some man may be listening at the dure."

"You have decided to gather the men to-night, Charley?" said Blacksmith Tom.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At the old place."

"Good. Then I may as well set about the work. Dan, let us go."

"A word first, Tom. I know you to be tried and true, and I need not recommend you to be cautious. You know as well as I the fate of Kershaw district hangs upon the caution used in this gathering. There are men who will come out to night who have halters about their necks in the shape of these accursed protections. You will whisper the word, 'caution and circumspection,' in the ear of every man."

"It shall be done, sir," said the blacksmith, drawing himself up. "I will do my duty."

"I know you will, old friend. Did you shoe my horse?"

"Yes. He is in the stable."

"Good-night for the present. Remember the work you have in hand."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SECRET MEETING.

UPON leaving the George, the two men separated, and passed from house to house, stopping here and there. Sometimes they met a man in the street, and when they did, they exchanged a few hurried words. It will only be necessary to follow the course of the blacksmith for the present. Approaching a house he rapped, and a man came to the door.



"Is that you, James?" said the blacksmith. "Caution."

"Ay, ay," said the man. "When shall it be?"

"To-night."

"Where?"

"The old place."

"Good."

It was a notable fact that in every case these exact words were used. The man closed the door and Tom passed on. In an hour they had completed their task, and returned to the smithy. They had no families, and lived in a small building attached to the forge-room. A grim smile lighted up the face of the blacksmith as he paused for a moment beside the forge to get a light for his pipe.

"They little think that we are so busy," he muttered. "If they did, many a man in Camden might tremble for his life. Ah, Dan, it's a hard work we have before us. Shall we ever succeed?"

"I hope so, masther dear," said Dan. "But, whatever happens, be sure av wan thing: be it for sorrow or pleasure, for good or for bad, Dan Maloney stands by ye til the last."

"I knew I could trust you, old boy," said the blacksmith. "That's right. Let us stick by one another, and it will be hard to beat us. Now come along."

The night was very dark, and they took their course toward the George. They did not enter at the front, for a number of officers were drinking there, in spite of the lateness of the hour. Dan left the blacksmith here, and he entered the house by the back entrance, and made his way to Surrey's room. At his low tap the young man opened the door, giving a meaning glance at his humble friend. The door closed after him, and they remained for half an hour in close conversation. At the end of that time they came out together. The house was now dark, but Tom could have gone over it blindfold. He took the hand of Surrey and led him to the entrance to the cellar, which opened from the back hall. Here they were met by the landlord.

"Be quick," he said; "some of the drunken hounds may take it into their heads to ramble about the house. Here is the key. Lock the door after you, so that they can not follow you down. I saw that Bilton sneaking about the



passages only a little while ago. He owes you no good will."

"I shall wring his neck one of these fine days," replied Surrey. "Go first, Tom; you know the house better than I do."

"All right," said Tom.

He entered, and the young man followed, locking the cellar door behind him. They had no light, but Tom had been there so often that he moved to the eastern wall, and, after working a moment, a door flew open and showed a scene only too familiar in the history of these times of trouble to the struggling colonies.

The place in which they found themselves was a cellar underneath the inn. Wine-casks blocked up one side of the room, and rum-punchcons the other. There was an open space in the center, and here a sort of platform had been built, to keep the feet of the occupants from the damp earth which formed the bottom of the vault. Upon this a rude seat was placed, which was occupied by one of the men the young American had met in the street that morning. He relinquished it as Surrey entered, and the rest of the occupants of the vault saluted him in military fashion.

"I am glad to see you, colonel," said the gentleman who had occupied the chair, "and I gladly give up my place to you. Gentlemen, friends of liberty, let us hear what this brave young man, who has fought so nobly to maintain the liberties of his country and State, has to say to us."

Young Surrey took the chair, and cast a look of approval at the intent faces ranged about him. His eye lit up at the expression he saw upon every one. There was not a man among them who was not willing to risk all for the much-loved cause.

"Dear friends," he said, "soon to be my companions in battle, I am glad to meet you. In appointing this meeting, I hoped to get the sentiment of all, and know how they stand in regard to the great question now before us—a question which calls for the warmest sympathy from all who have a heart to love their country and to feel for that country's wrongs. Down-trodden, oppressed, overrun by a hireling soldiery, we must struggle on, until the coming of a brighter morning



The hands which have been bold enough to strike with rude swords beaten out from mill-saws, will not falter now. Let each one do his part, and all will be well.

"My friends, the enemy tells us that we are beaten. I say 'nay' to that. Not while Marion, Pickens, Sumter, Henry, and Singleton are in the field, striking good blows for the country. I tell you, every wagon-train cut off, every Tory party cut to pieces, is ruin to these villains. Let every man do his best, and keep the enemy busy while the army recruits, and then once more to try the issue with saber and bayonet.

"To do this, we must labor for ourselves. Such hands as this now in your village must not, and shall not, be suffered to run at large. It is such marauding parties as this that keep our people under. Some of you saw the insult offered that lady this morning. I had nerved myself to bear much, but this was more than I could endure. I nearly betrayed myself."

"I believe the major suspects you," said the blacksmith. "I have seen him looking at you out of the corner of his eye in a way that didn't suit me. You are too straight in the shoulders for a civilian, colonel; and then, when two such swordsmen as those officers are beaten by a civilian, it looks a trifle queer, I reckon."

"You must be careful, colonel," said the gentleman who had occupied the chair. "You must indeed. Think what a loss it would be to the country if you should be taken. You know these ruffians too well to suppose that they would grant you any thing but short shrift and sudden cord."

"I know it," replied the young soldier, briefly. "Do you think, Mr. Warren, that I have not counted the cost well before I came here? Far from it. I know that my fate, if I am taken, will be an ignominious death on the scaffold. What of that? I shall only share the fate of Hale, that patriot martyr, around whose name a halo of glory will shine for all time. If, as you say, it is the will of God that I shall so die, far be it from me to cry out against it. No; I will die as I have lived, bold in the cause I have espoused, and to which I have dedicated the service of my life. Enough of this. We have come here to consult as to the best means of cutting off



this nest of villains who occupy this place. You have agreed to aid me, and I count much upon your assistance. Mr. Warren, how many men can you bring into the field?"

"Forty-two," replied Mr. Warren, "if we include Tom and Dan."

"Very good. I had hardly hoped that you could turn out so strong. I can muster as many more. With these, and the fact that our attack will be a complete surprise to them, I have no doubt as to the result. We have no time to waste, and I give you my orders at once. Let your men leave the village one by one, some of them to-night, and meet at the island in the cypress by eight o'clock to-morrow. I will see to it that the enemy come to the place where we need them. I have a plan formed for that purpose, which I will carry out by the aid of a friend of mine. God aid us in our enterprise, and may no man have cause to weep over to-morrow's work, except the enemy. Where are your arms?"

"Hidden in the cypress," replied Warren. "A curse upon these British hounds! they would rob us of our last weapon if we kept them at home. Go out first, colonel. We go out by the covered way."

The door in the wall was opened, and Surrey, followed by the blacksmith, made his way into the outer cellar. They had reached the hall, and were about to turn aside into the stairway which led to their room, groping their way in the darkness, when Tom found himself seized by the shoulder, while the voice of Bilton cried out:

"Halt here! I will know the meaning of all this tramping about the house at this time of night. Who are you?"

The answer was in Blacksmith Tom's own way. Drawing back his hand, he dealt the anxious inquirer after knowledge a blow under the ear, which sent him spinning to the earth, stunned and motionless. Then the two separated, Tom getting home as soon as he could, and the young partisan reaching his room. Just as he locked the door, Bilton was sitting up with a wondering expression on his face, feeling of a lump which was developing with marvelous rapidity under his ear. Blacksmith Tom was not a light hitter, and had thrown considerable vim into the blow. Bilton did not



think proper to make any trouble about the matter, as it might expose him to ridicule on the part of his friends.

Early in the morning he received a note from Surrey. It was couched in these words.

"Circumstances beyond my control render it impossible for me to keep the appointment with you at the hour named. But fear not but you shall have the satisfaction you have demanded and to which you have a right, and at an early day. We are enemies to the death, as I am the enemy of all low and villainous things. When you read this, I shall be gone. You shall hear from me. CHARLES SURREY."

Upon reading this, Bilton found the landlord, who was in the tap, dispensing Jamaica to some thirsty dragoons on the point of marching.

"You had a fellow here last night named Surrey?" said he.

"A gentleman of that name stopped here," replied the landlord.

"I said fellow. Don't repeat my words, sir. Where is he now?"

"I reckon he has gone away about his business," replied Uncle Ben.

"You reckon so. What do you know about it?"

"I know he paid his bill last night and ordered his horse for five in the morning," replied Uncle Ben. "I don't know where he has gone, so don't bother me."

"Don't be insolent. I believe you to be no better than a d—d Whig. Look out for yourself, my good host, for, as sure as we catch you napping, you shall hang as high as we can get you above the earth. And if I find this cowardly hound he shall suffer."

"Who mout you call a cowardly hound, Lieutenant Bilton?"

"That young scoundrel who was here yesterday."

"The same one who licked you? All right; he must be a durned coward. Jest so. What did you say, Sergeant Sawyer—Jamaica? Plenty of sugar and a touch of lemon in it is the way you take it. Now don't you bother me, Lieutenant Bilton. I ain't got any thing to do with your quarrels, and I won't stand to be blowed about 'em."

"What are you doing here, Lieutenant Bilton?" said Darnier, coming in at this moment. "Don't you hear the bugles? Get to saddle as soon as you can and see if you can efface the



memory of last night's work. If you do that, I shall have nothing to report when we return to Charleston."

Bilton slunk away and placed himself at the head of the men under his immediate command. Curry was there too, with a large bandage about his head, where the heavy hammer had fallen. The two looked hard at the smith as they rode past his door, and both of them registered a vow of vengeance against him. But the blacksmith stood in the doorway leaning on his hammer and watching them with an odd smile. They filed on past the door and disappeared. The moment they were gone the blacksmith threw down his hammer and called to Dan to follow.

"Let them ride on," he cried; "minions of a base and foolish king. There may be something they little dream of between them and their journey's end. Bring out the horses, Dan, and let us be on the way."

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## CHAPTER V.

### A LION IN THE PATH.

THE train which Major Darnier commanded was an important one to the army for whose use it was intended. It consisted not only of arms, but of medicines—something of which the Americans were sadly deficient. If Sumter and Marion could have known that this rich prize was passing through the country, they would have periled every thing in order to seize it. Darnier knew well enough that their swamp life was full of aches and pains which only a good medicine-chest could comfort. The major was riding on with a moody brow, thinking over the events of yesterday. He was troubled about the young stranger calling himself Charles Surrey, whom he had intended to question more closely next morning, if he had not taken himself off so suddenly. He called to the captain who had refused to act as Bilton's second in the quarrel at the George, who rode close to him at his summons.

"You noticed that young fellow who had so much trouble



with our officers yesterday, Luther," he said. "What did you think of him?"

"I thought him a gallant young man, and one who would make a better dragoon than any in our troop."

"Officers not excepted?" said Darnier, with his light laugh.

"Excepting no one. Who is there in the troop who could hold five men at bay for nearly three minutes, simply with sword and dagger. That young man is a soldier, and has fought on many fields."

"What makes you think that?"

Simply because he fights like a man who is accustomed to it. His eye is everywhere, and his hand is always ready. I should not be surprised if that young man gave us trouble before we reach our journey's end."

"No matter for that. Let me once leave these stores in safety, and I will give the rebels who have their haunts about Camden no rest. Your words are but an echo of my own thoughts. Ha! who is that? Sergeants Bailey and Snyder, ride out and seize yonder specimen of humanity, and bring him in. I would know whether any of the rebels have been lurking about here lately."

A few hundred yards to the right they saw a man, mounted upon a woebegone and sorry-looking mule, making frantic efforts to get out of their sight. Hearing the tramp of the coming hoofs, as the two dragoons designated rushed at him, he uttered a shrill cry of terror, and belabored his wretched beast with all his might. It was of no use, for the strong horses of the dragoons soon overtook him, and he was dragged back to face Darnier. The officers burst out into a laugh, which extended even to the men, at the figure before them. A lean, lank, hungry-looking individual, in a suit which was by no means fitted to his adult limbs. The legs of his jean pants were so tight, that the flesh seemed ready to burst them, and so short as to reveal nearly six inches of naked limb. His feet were clad in heavy moccasins of deer-hide. A coonskin cap, with three barred tails hanging at the side, was placed upon a shockingly tangled and neglected head of white hair. The face was a study, however. It did not look like that of a Southern man, and Darnier could not help thinking that this was one of those



irrepressible Yankees, with whom he had fought in the Northern colonies. He grinned in a conciliatory way as he saw the major, but wore a frightened look after all.

"Now, my man, what do you run away from us for?" cried the major. "Speak quickly, if you do not want your ears shaved off close to your head. Are you a Yankee?"

"I guess I be," said this odd specimen, with a twang which was irresistibly comic. "I donno what'n thunder y'u want tu meddle with me fur. I ain't hurt nobody. My name is Jared Skimpole."

"What are you doing here?"

"Didn't y'u see? I was ridin' along on my mule. Don't want tu purchase a mule, du y'u? 'Cause ef y'u du, I've got the all-firedest nicest mule on this side of the Santee. Now when y'u buy a mule—"

"Hold on, my friend. Have I said any thing about buying a mule?"

"Wal, I can't say y'u did, mister, but y'u look as ef y'u might by a little r'asonable talk. Gosh! what a lot of wagins y'u hev got. Lots of things to dicker fur in them, I guess. Who wants tu swap jack-knives. Unsight—unseen; come."

"I think we may as well hang this fellow," said Darnier, speaking so that the Yankee could hear him, though he turned his head aside. "He knows nothing."

"Thar, now; don't talk in that way, Gineral, don't. I ain't used tu it. I was brung up tu avoid the fatal noose. 'Bar the fell dragon's blightin' way, an' shun that lovely snare.' Don't talk about hanging me, Gineral."

"Then let me hear no more nonsense from you. I have not stopped you to trade for mules or jack-knives, but to get some information. You do not wish to be hung, neither do I wish to hang you. But, as surely as you refuse to answer my questions, I will string you up to yonder tree."

"Why didn't y'u say so then?" said the Yankee, in high wrath. "Y'u git mad tu easy; y'u du, I swow. What du y'u want me tu tell? I'm agreeable tu any thing."

"Have you seen any rebels about here lately?"

"Du y'u mean Continentals, Gineral?"

"Yes; any thing you like."



"Wal, I did see a grist of 'em a few hours ago up there by the river. They jest come out'n the cypress, the darnedest lot of critters y'u ever see. I had tu larf tu think that men should dress so darned ridiculous."

"How were they armed?"

"Same as I be. They all hed *tico*, except one chap that looked as if he hed one tooken off in a battle."

"One what?"

"Arm. Didn't you ask me how they was armed?—say!"

"You are the most consummate ass I ever met," said Darnier. "I meant to ask you what weapons they had."

"Weepons? Why didn't y'u say so then? Can't y'u ask a question straight? They had guns and swords, but not sech ones as y'u hev. Some guns was long an' some short, an' some had bows and arrers."

"How many did you count?"

"'Bout fifty."

"Which way were they going?"

"Southerly, 'bout."

"Did they seem in haste?"

"No, General. The owdashus critters seemed to take it jest as easy as if they had a perfect right. I never did see sech consaited critters in my born days. You'd 'a' thought, to see 'em ride by, so scrumptious an' bold, that they didn't care a continental cuss for King George. Now that's what I call downright impidence."

"I will find a way to punish it before many hours go by," said Darnier, knitting his brows. "They shall see that Darnier's Dragoons are for service, not for sport. The devil take all, why did they send me upon this boy's service. Luther, I will turn aside and put these ragged rascals to flight."

"Not with my counsel, major," said Captain Luther. "Understand me, Ransom. If you order the troop to turn, I shall go with them, and fight to the bitter end. But I protest against it, as placing the convoy in peril."

"Peril! Bah! I hope you are not afraid of these rascals."

"You should know William Luther better than that, Ransom Darnier. I know you do, and but that I know how hot



your blood is, and how quickly you repent a wrong done, I would resent it. What are your orders?"

"Detail Lieutenants Bilton and Curry to take charge of the convoy, with twenty men. The rest follow me."

Low murmurs of pleasure ran through the ranks of the dragoons, for they were eager to have a brush with the Whigs.

Twenty men were quickly selected, and the wagons drew together in an open space upon the edge of the cypress swamp. The rest of the troop faced about, and prepared to follow Darnier.

"Now, my man," said the major, catching the Yankee by the collar, "understand your duty before you start. I am certain you know where to find these fellows, and I insist upon your at once leading the way. Make the slightest resistance, or attempt to escape, and you are a dead man. Give him a horse, here. I am not going to be retarded by the movements of such a mule as that."

"Hold on!" bawled Jared Skimpole, "I *can't* ride a hoss. It's hard enough to ride a mule, dod rot his pictur'."

"I'll teach you to ride," said Darnier, seizing him again and dragging him almost by main strength into the saddle of the horse brought up by the dragoon. "Get your feet in the stirrups, and don't dare to fall off, for your life."

"Who-o-o-o-oh!" howled Jared, grasping the mane of the horse with both hands, and hanging on with a vice-like grip. "Go steady, can't ye? This ain't fair, nohow. Now, General, gimme my mule. I kin ride him, but I'm afraid of this condemned hoss. Who-o-o-oh!"

Laying his hand upon the bridle of the plunging horse, Darnier quieted him, and pushing into a brisk trot, led the troop forward. Jared bounded up and down in the saddle with a most woebegone face, uttering prayers for mercy which only aroused laughter on the part of the dragoons. After a while he seemed to get the motion of the horse better, but was in constant danger of falling.

"I'll never see that mule ag'in," he whined. "This comes of bein' I'yal to king an' kentry. Say, General, can't ye ease up a little? This shakes up my innards powerful bad, this does. I ain't used to it the least bit in the world, an' I don't



know as I kin stand it. S'pose them fellers ain't where I see 'em, how kin I find 'em?"

"I will find a way to make you find them, my lad," said Darnier. "How far is it to the place where you saw them?"

"Four miles, mebbe."

"Then lead us directly to the spot."

"Jest as you say, Ginerel. I hope y'u will find 'em, but when y'u du, don't hold onto me any longer. I can't fight a bit, Lord bless ye. I'm a nat'ral coward, I guess, an' it always makes me sick at the stomach when I hear them blasted guns."

"Keep silent and lead the way. You may run as soon as you like, after you have showed us the enemy."

"All right, Ginerel; I'll do my best to show 'em tu y'u, for I du think they're a little the impudentest set of chaps I ever did see. They stopped me, y'u know, an' was goin' tu lick me, 'cause I wouldn't jine 'em. I told 'em I wasn't a fightin' character, but it didn't seem to make no sort of difference to them. They only larfed at me. Turn tu the right."

They left the main road at this point, and turned into a bridle-path leading toward the river. The men were forced to fall into double file to pass through. A mile further on they caught a glimpse of shining water, and knew that the Santee was at hand. Just then a shrill, clear whistle sounded through the depths of the forest, as the troop grouped together for a moment in a small opening, and a close fire was poured in from every side. Many saddles were emptied by the fire, and the dragoons were thrown into confusion.

"Who-o-oh! Darn you, who-o-oh!" roared the Yankee, as his horse began to plunge fearfully. It was of no avail, for the frightened steed turned and bolted into the bushes, bearing Jared upon his back. There was no time to attend to him, for at this moment a voice which rung out like the blast of a bugle, shouted:

"Prepare to mount! Mount!"

Darnier was making frantic attempts to rally his men, and had partially succeeded, aided by Luther, when the same voice cried:

"Charge!"



Then came a wild rush of steeds, a fierce battle-cry, and a body of men, at least equal in number to the dragoons, and far better mounted, plunged through their half-formed ranks, cleaving a bloody lane with their sabers. Foremost among them, wielding a ponderous blade such as few men could use, rode Tom Matthews, and by his side the Irishman, Dan Malony. They passed through and wheeled to renew the charge. By this time the remainder of the dragoons had formed, and being desperate, presented a bold front. Just then the bushes parted, and a man mounted upon a noble black steed, wearing the uniform of a Continental colonel, rode in between the combatants. He faced the British troops, and they saw that it was the man they had known as Charles Surrey, in Camden.

"Surrender!" he cried. "You are overmatched, and we will give you good quarter."

"Never!" yelled Darnier. "Charge, my brave lads, and hew down that young traitor first of all."

Surrey waved his sword, and his own troop were immediately in motion, and they met with a terrible shock in the center of the open space. Then began one of those deadly hand-to-hand frays which have no place in history, and yet which did more to drive the enemy from the soil of Carolina than the pitched battles. Bound to a stake, the British fought, as only Britons can, nobly and resolutely. In the midst of the fray, Darnier and Charles Surrey crossed blades. Both were practiced swordsmen and had tried their powers in battle, and neither would yield to the other. The fierce blows of the young Continental fell like rain, and were skillfully parried. All around them the work of death was going on. Luther had gone down under the sweep of Blacksmith Tom's weapon, and was a prisoner; half the dragoons were on the ground dead or wounded, and yet the young champions fought on. Blacksmith Tom, turning back from the encounter with Luther, rushed to aid his young commander.

"Keep back, Tom," he cried. "Do not dare to interfere."

Tom cast a hasty glance over the field, and saw that the British were put to flight, and remained near by, watching the fray. "Keep cool, cunnel," he said. "That's the true art of saber play. Never let your angry passions rise, and watch



the eye of your enemy. Steady is the word and you have got him."

Surrey suddenly backed his horse and then threw him bodily upon the steed of Darnier. Down went horse and man, rolling on the sod. He was entangled in the stirrups, and before he could free himself, Surrey stood over him with uplifted blade, the ardor of battle in his eyes. "Surrender or die," he hissed. Darnier saw that all hope was gone, and yet, entangled as he was, lifted his sword and made a blow at his enemy. Surrey parried it with a laugh and called to Tom Matthews.

"Come down and hold him, Tom. This is sheer madness, major. Why not make a virtue of necessity and surrender with a good grace. Let me take your sword and assist you in rising."

Darnier threw down his blade with an oath, and Surrey, assisted by Tom, dragged him from under the horse.

"So my misgivings of your true calling were too well founded," said Darnier, folding his arms. "You have me at your mercy. Show me a greater mercy still and cleave me to the chin."

"You have suffered a loss, Major Darnier," said Surrey. "But we are not the men to exult over a fallen foe. It is true that we might follow the example of some of your leaders and refuse to hear the cry for quarter, but murder is not our business. It may be some satisfaction to you to know that you are reputed one of the most humane of the cavalry leaders of the British army, and while our men execrate the names of Tarleton, Cunningham and Huck, they look upon you as a noble foe, worthy of their steel."

"Enough of flattery," said Darnier. "I am your prisoner, but I would sooner lie on the cold bed where so many of my brave troop are than live to suffer disgrace. I suppose the wagon train is taken."

"Not yet," said Surrey. "There; do you not hear the rifles? My major is at them."

A single volley, followed by a dropping fire, was heard in the direction of the wagons. Then a dead silence reigned, and Surrey smiled proudly. He had confidence that the men he had deputed to do the work would do it well.



"Sergeant Withers, you will remain and see after the wounded. Take charge of all, and two wagons shall be sent you to carry them in. Leave those very badly wounded on the enemy's side with Mr. Carter, on the hill yonder. He is a Tory, and ought to be glad to do something for the cause. Gentlemen, will you give me your parole of honor not to attempt an escape?"

Seeing nothing to be gained by refusing, the officers acceded to the request. Their horses were given them, and the troop set off at a brisk pace toward the place where they had left the wagons. Half an hour's ride brought them to the spot, where they found the entire guard prisoners to a little more than their number of Whigs. Bilton had made very little resistance, as he knew that the odium of the defeat would fall upon Darnier. Surrey cast one withering look at Bilton and came forward.

"I have heard that you have insulted me by the title of coward," he said. "There is no better time than this to settle our difficulty. Will you choose your weapons?"

"I am a prisoner," said Bilton. "You do well to insult one who can not help himself."

The young officer who had charge of the troop which captured the wagons approached and whispered something in the ear of Surrey. He started violently.

"Ha! say you so? Then let us start at once, my dear Ned. You must take charge of the wagons and prisoners, and take them to the place you know of. Withers has ten men with him now, and you had better take ten more. You may as well take the wagons as far as you can get them. Stop on the way at the place where the ambush was laid, and take up the wounded, except those whose recovery is doubtful. Withers has instructions what to do with them. Gentlemen, you are in charge of Captain Edward Langdon, who will treat you as brave men should be treated. Choose your men, Ned."

Langdon picked out his men by name, and they fell out of the line. The rest were in the saddle and preparing to move when Langdon stopped the colonel.

"The person who had charge of the wagons wishes to give his parole."

"I refuse to take it. Grant a parole to all the rest who



wish to give it, but keep him strictly watched. I do not intend to let him escape me, and he shall give me a meeting."

"You shall repent this, sir," hissed Bilton. "I am not a man to bear an insult tamely."

"All in good time," cried Surrey. "Fall in, boys. There is more work for us to do before sunset."

Darnier said nothing, and saw the troops march away in the direction of the river, while the wagons which he had been sent to guard were moving in nearly the opposite direction. Why did Surrey desert them and march away so hastily, leaving the wagons to take care of themselves? He had no time to think of it, for Langdon at once secured all the prisoners by tying their feet beneath the saddles and their hands behind them, threw out all useless materials from the wagons, and followed them to the spot where the battle had taken place.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### TOM'S RECRUIT.

SURREY had good reason for marching as quickly as he did. Langdon had picked up a paper informing him that another convoy, nearly as large as the one they had seized, would cross the river at nightfall and proceed to a Tory rendezvous a few miles north of Camden, and that Rawdon would occupy the village that night. Surrey had taken a sudden fancy to the work about Camden, and he was not the first who had fallen a victim to a beautiful woman at the first glance of her eyes. He had never seen Maud Carroll until that time in Camden, and then her beauty and courage had touched a heart before impervious to any thing except the call of country.

"This has been a noble work to-day," said Blacksmith Tom. "Lord love my heart alive, how the boys will snicker when they come out in bran-new shoes, with new sabers and belts. It was a Godsend to them. Now ef we kin ketch this other convoy, we are made."



"We shall do it," said Surrey. "But we shall need your help. Come beside me a moment."

They rode a little in advance, conversing in low, earnest tones. At the end of their conference the blacksmith called Dan Malony, and the two rode away as hard as they could go, leaving the troop behind. Two hours hard riding brought them to a small house half hidden in a thick growth of trees, about three miles from Camden. Tom rode up and rapped upon the door with the handle of his whip. A young woman came to the door, who uttered a pleased cry as she saw them.

"Don't holler, Mary," said Tom. "Let us in. We are on business."

"Yes, Tom, yes," said the woman, eagerly. "Come in quick. You had better tie your horses under the trees, for the red-coats might come. They are thick enough about here now. Did you say Billy was well?"

"Well and hearty, little 'un," said the stalwart blacksmith. "We've jist had a scrimmage with Darnier's dragoons, and come out first best. I shouldn't wonder but your husband might happen along before the day is over. Take care of the horses, Dan. I'll go in and be getting ready. Take them deep into the woods, now."

Dan hurried away with the animals, and returned as quickly as he could. When he entered the house, the woman, who was the wife of one of Surrey's men, had begun to fry some eggs and bacon. Tom was not to be seen, and Mrs. Conway pointed to a door which opened into a room at the back of the cabin. Dan entered, and in a few moments the two emerged, dressed in their everyday habiliments, and sat down to the table which was set for them. Both did ample justice to the savory food, and had nearly finished their repast, when the tramp of coming hoofs announced new arrivals, and the two sprung to their feet and hurried into the little room from which they had come a short time before. Mary sprung to the door and dropped the bar just as a heavy knock sounded upon it. She paid no heed to it, but hurriedly removed the evidences of the late repast. The knocking was repeated, and a harsh voice called out:

"Open, in the king's name."

She at last went to the window, and opening it, looked out.



She saw there four of the fugitives who had fled from the late encounter with Surrey, whose horses were splashed with the mud of the swamps through which they had passed in their flight. The man who was knocking at the door was a burly, huge-bearded fellow, wearing the stripes of a corporal.

"Here, woman," he cried, "why don't you open the door? Death! do you want us to batter it down? It will be the worse for you if we do."

"Oh, I will open it to king's men," she said, cheerfully. "How did I know but it might be Whigs?"

"That's right," said the man, mollified by her apparent loyalty. "We are hungry and tired, and must have something to eat before we push on."

Mary opened the door, and the men came trooping in, muttering to each other as they did so. Mary again put the grid-iron into requisition, broiled some of the bacon and fried some eggs, and these, with a large can of coffee and a pile of pone bread, completed the repast. The men stacked their arms just inside the door, and set to work, tooth and nail, eating as only men can who have ridden fast and far after a fight.

"D—n the luck!" said Corporal Flynn, with his mouth full of bacon and egg. "Who would have thought to see the scoundrels come flying out of the bushes in that way? The cursed Yankee, too. I have a notion the scoundrel knew they were there all the time."

"Oh no, that can't be," said one of the men. "He was half scared to death, and had no more idea of their presence than we had; I could see that. His horse bolted with him, you know."

"There is one thing I am certain of, then," replied Flynn, "and that is this: that Camden blacksmith was there with his man. Let him never come back to his forge while we stay in his section, if he would save himself from the swinging bough and the hempen cord. We will teach these Whigs that they can not work on, taking our money and pretending to be friends to our cause, while in reality waiting an opportunity to deal us a blow. I know this rascally blacksmith well, and will never rest until he is mine."

"He's desperate impudent," said Mary, counterfeiting anger against the blacksmith. "He don't like me, because I think



the king has a right to do as he pleases about tea and paper and such like. Lord bless him, it's little tea or paper we use here in the cypress. Have some more coffee, sergeant. You don't mean to tell me, do you, that the pesky varmints beat you?

"It was a surprise, you see," said Corporal Flynn. "A Yankee who was riding by on a mule guided us to the spot, and we came upon them before we were aware, and they were five to one."

"Lord sakes! what a sight of rebels they must have in the swamp. You had nigh a hundred men when you went by."

"So we had; so we had," replied Flynn. "You are right, my good woman; but, we think that the whole of Sumter's cavalry were upon us at once."

"I did hear that Sumter was nigh Hanging Rock. Maybe he moved since," said Mary.

"No matter who it was, they must have had the most men, because no equal number of them could whip Darnier's dragoons."

"To be sure. That is just what I thought myself, because your men always look so handsome and stout in their uniform, while these swamp suckers, who might be good-looking men in good clothes, are so ragged and dirty I can't abide 'em."

"That shows good taste upon your part, my good woman," said the corporal. "On the whole, you may fill my cup again. You say you know this blacksmith of Camden, and he has been impudent to you?"

"More times than you can count, corporal," said Mary. "My husband is away from home, and I'm a lone woman. I should be more afraid if the king's men did not ride by now and then."

"Thank you. Have you seen any thing of this Matthews lately?"

"Yesterday morning he rode by with that man of his they call Dan Malony, the most impudent Irishman that ever breathed the breath of life. They was holding toward the river when we seen 'em, and I s'pose they was riding out to fight with your men."



"No doubt, no doubt. Let him look to this, for if I ever meet him face to face, he shall go down."

"He's mighty strong, corporal," said Mary.

"That makes no sort of odds to me. I am strong too, and I could put him on his back; I'm certain of it."

"But they do say he's the best man about Camden, and that even Pete Francis can't put him down easy. I'm a friend to the king, but I don't think, really and truly, that you could put Tom Matthews on his back."

"I tell you I can!" roared Flynn, stretching out his arm to show the ridges of his powerful muscles. "I'm no chicken."

"Perhaps you are stronger than I think you are," said Mary; "but I never saw the man yet could throw Tom Matthews fair."

"And if so be you think you can do it, corporal, there is no time like the present," said a quiet voice, close at hand.

The four men started up and looked for their guns. What did they see? Standing just inside the door, each with a rifle at his shoulder, stood the two men of whom they had been talking, between them and their arms. Mary uttered a terrific scream, and throwing open the back door, ran out of the house. Flynn would have followed, but the stern voice of the blacksmith recalled him.

"Halt, on your life, corporal!" he shouted. "Another step and you are dead! Beware what you do."

"I know you, traitorous dog!" roared Flynn. "The time will come when you will hang between heaven and earth, a spectacle for all true men to look at. Once for all, what do you want?"

"You ought to know," said Tom, coolly; "your surrender."

"Never!"

"That's soon said. Now I mean to have you, living or dead, and I don't want to kill you. That ain't any use, as I see. Give yourselves up like men, when there is no chance."

Flynn looked at him with a fierce glare, and made a step in advance. But the gleam in the eyes of Blacksmith Tom stopped him in his onward course.



"I'm looking through the sights at you," said he, "and when your boot touches a certain crack in the floor you are dead, if you rush at me. We've got your guns and sabers—what is the use of kicking?"

"I can not surrender," said Flynn; "we are four to you, two."

"You waste time," said Matthews. "I am going to count five. At the last word I will shoot you dead if you do not surrender. You are carrying bull-headed obstinacy too far, and I will not endure it, neither have I the time to waste. One!"

The face of Flynn began to lose some portion of its color as that sonorous voice toned out the first word of the count. He looked at his men and saw that they were already appalled by the stern manner of the blacksmith, as they might well be. A word will explain how this was done. While the dragoons were feasting in the house, Tom had softly opened the window of the little room in which they lay concealed, and climbing out, gained the front of the house unperceived, followed by Dan. Each had a rifle with him, and, after listening a while to the conversation of the dragoons, they had darted in and seized the arms.

"See here," said Flynn, "you shall pay dearly for this."

"Two!" said Tom, steadily.

"The officers of my regiment will avenge me if you murder me here."

"Your blood upon your own head," said the blacksmith, sternly. "Three!"

It was beyond human nature to endure this. Flynn saw the strong man raise his rifle, and knew that he was doomed. Throwing up his hands, he cried out, "I surrender. What are your terms?"

"Sensible at the last," said Tom. "Send your men forward one at a time to be tied. My man will do the job, and I will shoot the first one who makes the slightest show of resistance."

The men came forward one at a time, and Dan Malony bound them with their own belts, talking to them in the wheedling, persuasive blarney of which only a thorough Irishman is master, while they growlingly submitted to the oper-



ation. "Ah, ye darlints," he would say, "how the divil c'u'd we help it? Sorra the day that made me do the like to a fine lot av b'ys like you. 'Deed, an' it's mesilf is sorry for that same."

"Shut up," said Flynn. "When did you kiss the blarney-stone last?"

"No matther for that, me fine lad," said Dan. "Sure I know where ye kem from right well. Ye are a county Antrim man, be me sowl. Hould stiddy, me darlint, an' take care I don't dhraw the sthraps too tight, a thing I wouldn't do til a counthryman in the world, though how a man born an' brid unther the dirthy tyrannical country av Britain can fight for her, an' he an Irishman, is more than I know."

The work was soon done, and the three privates, bound hand and foot, stood before them. Then the blacksmith turned to Corporal Flynn, who had not yet been bound.

"I heard you saying to this woman, who is feeding the foes of her kentry, the more to her disgrace, that you would like to measure strength with Tom Matthews. I always like to stimulate young men of muscle every way I can. It pleases me right well when I kin find one of that sort. That's the reason you ain't tied yit. I reckon you've got a consait of your muscules, and to tell the hull truth, you are a powerful lad every way. So, for the honor of the kentry, let's try a fall out here on the grass."

"Just as you like," said Corporal Flynn, stretching up his tail figure. "I'm not afraid of you, fight me in what way you will—pistols, swords, or fists. Michael Flynn is your man."

"And a right plucky lad you are," said Tom, admiringly. "You stay here and look arter these men, Dan, while Corporal Flynn and I walk out here on the grass a little; and let it be understood, free and full, that if this Corporal Flynn puts me on my back, he's to go free. I won't take no advantage of a man."

The two stalwart men walked out together upon the turf, just in front of the cottage, and stripped off their coats, looking at each other keenly as they did so, each with a sort of respect for the muscle of the other. As Corporal Flynn had truly said, he was no chicken. He stood nearly six feet high,



with a corresponding breadth of shoulder, and Tom knew that he had no easy job cut out for him.

"It's a pity to me," said the blacksmith, "that a man like you should be fightin' on the side of a tyrant, ag'in' a free people. It sounds mighty hard."

"Look here," said Flynn, "I want to make you an offer. I'm no ways in love with the British army, and this is the chance. If you put me down, I'll join the boys in the swamp; if I should put you down, you join Darnier's dragoons."

"It's a fair offer," said Tom. "Agreed. Take your hold."

The two men clenched, and for some moments tugged and strained without any result either way; but only Dan Malony knew that Blacksmith Tom had not yet shown half his power. To say the truth, he found his antagonist so skillful in the tricks of the practiced wrestler, that he did not dare to try his own skill fully until he had blown his opponent. The three Englishmen looked on with supercilious faces.

"Can't any one throw Mike Flynn, you know," said one of them. "He's the best wrestler in the army. That big blacksmith is strong, but you can see he hasn't the science. That's what tells in wrestling: science. It's like your awmy fighting our awmy. The science is all on one side."

"Phich wan?" said Dan.

"Our awmy, of course," said the man.

"The divil a bit," said Dan. "Phy didn't ye shtand up better whin the colonel rode at ye the day wid his bould b'ys behint him? Because ye had too much science, I does be thinkin'. Git away wid your nonsints."

"Mike Flynn will put your big bully down, though," said the dragoon.

"Not he," said Dan. "Wait till the man gets waked up. He's but slapin' now. D'ye hear the bla'g'ards talk, ould man?"

"All right, I hear them," replied Tom, quietly. "That don't make any difference with me, of course."

"You play carefully," said Flynn, a little angry as he looked in vain for an opening for his favorite trip. "I thought you were in a hurry."

"No hurry to join the British army," said the blacksmith.



"I think I'd be out of place there. No, man, there is no power to take me into the ranks of the enemy. I feel sure, that if you had twice your power, you could not force me into that army."

The struggle went on, the blacksmith still upon the defensive. Flynn exhausted every ruse to get him off his guard, but his efforts were in vain. Tom, with the same immovable smile upon his lips, kept his feet and temper, and Flynn began to lose his. From that moment he was lost. Tom changed his tactics, and began a series of dextrous feints which Flynn did not understand, and to which he fell a victim. Matthews apparently stumbled, and fell toward his antagonist. He threw himself forward to finish the struggle, but Tom, who had never lost his balance, met him full and threw him over his hip upon the sod, where he lay prostrate, the blood running in little rills from his mouth and nostrils. Tom ran to him, raised his head and administered a sup of brandy, and in a moment "Richard was himself again." Flynn rose and extended his hand to the blacksmith.

"I'm not ashamed to be beaten by a man like you," he said, "and I'll keep my word. Count me as one of your Swamp Rangers."

"Good," said Tom. "That job being finished, I will leave you and Dan to take the prisoners back to the band, while I do some work on this side. Here, Dan."

He drew the Irishman aside and whispered something in his ear. Dan nodded and called to Flynn to come and get the horses. In five minutes they were in motion, Flynn making himself useful in watching his late comrades, and evidently bent upon keeping his word. It is but common justice to him to say that he was a true man, and when Washington charged the redoubts at Yorktown, he had no braver man in the forlorn hope than Captain Michael Flynn, late of Darnier's dragoons. Tom looked after them with a smile.

"A good recruit, and one who will be as good as his word," he muttered. "Come out here, Mary, and I will tell you what to do."



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE IDIOT.

MAUD CARROLL had been deeply interested in the young soldier who had so boldly put himself in danger for a stranger's sake, and had hoped that he would come and visit her before he left Camden. But, as we have seen, he was forced to leave the place hastily and forego the pleasure of meeting her. She was a little nettled that he should act so carelessly toward her after doing her a service, and as the day went by and he did not come, she sent a servant to the tavern with a note to him asking him to come and see her that evening. The servant came back with the note, and told her that the gentleman had left the hotel early in the morning, and would not return. The negro was full of the skirmish in the bush, and the capture of the wagon-train—for some of the fugitives had already returned—and gave his mistress an exaggerated account of the affray.

"Fo' de Lord, missee," he said, "dey do say in Camden dat de young gemman what save you from dem sojers—blast deir impudence—is a Whig, an' come yer jest to fin' out how many ob de red coats was yer. Dat's w'at dey say. Fo' my bressed Marster, I t'ink he somebody more dan common truck, now you 'member dat."

"Who said that, Jake?" said Maud, eagerly.

"Sojer said it; sojer wid a cut on he face dat he say dat young gemman gib him. An' dey do say dat bracksmit', Tom Matthew, he was dar fightin' like de debble. I donno for sure wedder it true or not, but he gone somewhar, an' Dan he go wid him. Enty you t'ink dey Whigs, missee?"

"No matter what I think, Jake. I can forgive this young gentleman for not paying me a visit if his reason for it was so good, and he has been doing the country a service. He is a brave man, at any rate. Did you see these dragoons yourself, Jake?"

"Iss, missee; I see 'em wid my own eye, sittin' on de ve-



randy, wid he darned ole face tied up in a rag; an' sarbe him juss right for to come for to go for to try to lick de Whigs. Lordy! dey do say dat de way Bracksmit' Tom mek de fur fly out ob dem red-coats was a sin to snakes. He powerful strong, dat Bracksmit' Tom."

"He is a gallant man, and has done good service before now. Go back to the village and pick up all the information you can, and return when you have it. I think you had better wait until more of the soldiers have come in, for others must have escaped."

The negro went away, and reëntered the village. As he neared the tavern he saw quite a crowd gathered about a man who had just come in from the other side. Jake got into the crowd to get a view of him, and saw a man whom he did not know, whose expressionless face and vacant stare proclaimed him one upon whom the hand of God had been laid—an idiot. There was no mistaking that expression. He was ragged and dirty, and many who looked on said what a noble frame he had, and what a pity so stalwart a man should be so stricken. He was deathly pale, and had painted his face and hands in an uncouth manner. A white sheet was thrown over his shoulders, and once in a while he would raise his arms and give himself the appearance of having wings. No one in the crowd had ever seen him before, though Jake could not keep down the feeling that somewhere he had seen that face under different circumstances. This strange individual held in one hand a tin horn, which every now and then he raised to his lips and blew a sonorous blast.

"I am the angel Gabriel!" he shouted. "Behold, I call all here to repentance. Is it not written in the book that I will come and sound my trumpet? The earth is red with the blood of my saints, and now the time cometh, with blood, fire, and vapor of smoke. Ye have offended my little ones, and their blood cries out from the ground. Hear me while I speak, and take heed of my words, for the time is near at hand. A voice came to me out of a cloud and said, 'Gabriel, sound.' And behold, I am here; let all men keep silent before me."

A horse-laugh was the only reply from some of the dragoons, who had returned,



"Some ill-conditioned son of earth laughs at my words. I look at him and his coat is red, the color of the blood of my little ones he hath shed. But a voice says to me that the time has come, and the hour. The hand of the Lord hath smitten the enemy sore, and they have fled away from before my face."

"Shut his mouth," said one of the dragoons; "curse him, he is more knave than fool."

"Keep silent before me," returned the idiot, "or before I leave the place I will strike you at my foot and set my heel upon you. What is your strength to mine? As I passed by I saw men flying for their lives. Their coats were red, but their faces were white as milk. Great fear came upon them all."

A burly dragoon thrust himself forward and faced the idiot.

"Look you, my man," he said, "we have had enough of this foolishness, and we will not endure it. If you do not keep silent I will trounce you."

"Listen to the ungodly man and the wine-bibber," shouted the idiot. "How great is his wrath because the words of truth sound in his ear and he is sore afraid. He would even lay his hand upon one who speaks only what he hears from the rocks and trees."

A murmur was heard among the people, and a sound as of the wind passing through the trees. If the dragoon had been a wise man, he would have receded and given it up. But he was angry, in the first place, at having been one of a beaten party that morning, and wanted revenge in some way. He advanced and laid his hand upon the shoulder of the idiot. Weapons were drawn upon the instant on both sides, when they saw the idiot raise his powerful figure to its full height, towering above the dragoon.

"My mission is of war," he cried, "and the ungodly man rages. Behold, I will strike him a heavy blow between the eyes, which shall lay him even with the ground."

To the utter surprise of every one, the idiot doubled his fist and gave the dragoon a buffet which might have felled an ox. The fearful impetus which a strong man gives a blow at the moment of delivery is wonderful, and the man went down as



quickly as if stricken by a thunderbolt, and lay there, with his nose beaten out of shape. Some of his companions rushed forward, but the idiot struck two quick blows, and sent two others to join their companion upon their mother earth. An angry buzz succeeded, and pistols and swords were again drawn. All this time the idiot had never moved from his first position except to strike, but stood astride of the man first knocked down, declaiming wildly.

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" he cried. "As ye sow, so shall ye also reap. Is it not written, 'One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled?' I am as a lamb among wolves."

"A healthy lamb," muttered a stout Whig near him. "Good for you, old man."

"I tell you he shall not go unpunished," shouted the soldier. "He has insulted king's men; and madman or sane, he shall repent it. Look out what you do here in Camden, or Rawdon will light a fire to warm you when he comes."

"Be that as it may," said a Whig, "it shall not be said that the people of Camden suffered you to assail an unarmed man, and he an idiot. Let him alone, and he will not harm you in the least."

"My mission is one of wrath," said the idiot. "I will smite yonder red-clothed soldier, hip and thigh."

"Come away," said the Whig. "Don't be foolish now, or you may get into trouble. Come to my house."

"Nay; I will wait here until the son of Satan who leads these evil men to battle appears. Then will I take a sword in my hand and smite him, as aforetime did the noble men of yore when they went out against the Philistines."

"The devil," said the Whig. "Will you come with me? You will get your neck stretched if you don't look out."

"I will see the man of blood," replied the other, stubbornly. "And I will even warn him to flee from the wrath to come. Peradventure it may seem just unto thee to aid me in smiting them with the sword."

"Confound his stubborn temper," said the Whig to a companion. "The fellow will surely get himself into trouble, if we allow him to stay here. Hark!"

A distant bugle-blast was heard, and they saw the idiot



raise his head in a listening attitude. The blast was repeated, and other martial strains blended with it, told that the British army, or a portion of it, to say the least, was near at hand. The idiot laughed wildly, flapped his arms, and blew his horn. The man who had been knocked down rose dizzily, and seeing the aspect of affairs, began to bluster again. Quite a number of men interposed between the irate Englishman and the object of his wrath, who did not seem to fear him in the least.

"Come away, Nick," said one of his comrades. "Don't set your wit to a fool's."

"No, for it won't stand the test," muttered a Whig. "Rawdon is coming, a black curse upon him. Now for warm times in Camden!"

As he spoke, a mounted officer, with forty or fifty dragoons, dashed into the place at full speed, scattering the people right and left as he came. He pulled up in front of the tavern, and shouted to the people to keep silent.

"Good people of Camden, ye who are loyal to the king, Lord Rawdon, by the grace of God, and George the Third, Commander-in-Chief of the army in this province, is about to enter your town. See that you receive him as becomes his rank and office."

The martial music grew louder and louder, and the tread of many feet could be heard. All Camden turned out to see, for a British army upon the march was a grand sight to behold, even though they came as enemies. Horse, foot, and artillery, they marched through the town, glittering in uniform, erect and stately, as England's soldiers always are. The regiment which marched in front was that famous cavalry force, which had gained such a terrible reputation upon the rivers of Carolina, the troop of Tarleton. Low murmurs arose on every side, as that dreadful scourge appeared, for there was hardly a family in this section who had not at one time or another suffered through him. He rode on in moody silence, by the side of Rawdon, looking fiercely at the crowd. The idiot had forced his way to the front, and his eye encountered that of the cavalry chief, and its wild gleam was terrible. Tarleton noticed him, and directed the attention of Rawdon to him.



"Send some one to bring him to us when we are encamped," said the Commander-in-Chief. The colonel turned to an orderly, and sent him on the mission, while they rode on to the town, where it had been decided to establish head-quarters for the present. A few feeble cheers for Lord Rawdon were heard, but they were only raised by Darnier's dragoons. Lord Rawdon frowned darkly.

"A stiff-necked and rebellious people, whom nothing but harsh measures will ever be able to overcome, Bannister," said he, speaking to Tarleton. "You alone, of all my officers, seem to understand this fact."

"Wipe them out root and branch, even at the risk of a reputation for barbarity," said Tarleton. "That is my motto. This namby-pamby way will not work with these fellows. Grant them protection, and in three months they will be in the swamps, fighting against us."

"Let me catch one who has broken his protection," growled Rawdon, "and God pity him, for I will hang him up for the crows to peck at, as an example to his companions. Where is the orderly you sent in search of that odd genius in the white sheet? Tell them to bring him into the parlor, and then close the doors. We will have a little sport at his expense. Let the army bivouac just outside the town."

With these words, Rawdon entered the parlor, while Tarleton stepped back to execute his orders. He returned in a few moments, accompanied by an orderly, dragging in the idiot. He shook himself free from the man who held him, and stood with folded arms staring at the Commander-in-Chief and his staff.

"Well, my man, you *are* an odd specimen," said Rawdon. "Who are you?"

"I am Gabriel!" replied the idiot. "I call all here to repentance."

"Umph; a strange angel you make," said Rawdon, laughing. "Doubtless, however, you will make a better one than any in this presence. Who is this fellow?"

"Stop," cried the strange being. "Ask not these men with red coats who I am, for I will speak. I am one who is sent before to warn you of the evil days before you, if you keep on in your sinful and murderous career. The blood of many



noble men, shed upon every plain, from South to North, cries out to the Lord for vengeance. See Tarleton, with his savage face, glaring at me. See Campbell, Cunningham and the rest. Against these I am called, and to these I speak. I am Gabriel, and I call you all to repentance."

"He is an idiot," said Rawdon, "and is hardly amusing. Send him out."

"The turning point has come," cried the idiot, "and already these men of blood begin to tremble. Send out and ask the men what has become of the wagons, and the red-coats who guarded them, who marched out of Camden this morning."

"What do mean?"

"I am a poor fool," said the other, his under-jaw dropping, and the vacant expression coming into his face again. "I don't know what you ask."

"Speak, fool. What of Darnier and the wagon-train? If you do not tell me, I will have you cut into inch pieces."

"I am a poor fool," replied the idiot. "The soldiers can tell you. They came back."

"Go out and see, Bannister," said Rawdon. "My heart misgives me. If Darnier has suffered himself to be drawn into a trap, I shall not know whom to trust. Don't wait, Bannister."

Tarleton hurried out, and returned in a moment with one of Darnier's men, who gave an account of the manner in which they fell a prey to the ambuscade. Rawdon heard him without any attempt to disguise his rage, for this train was of peculiar importance to the garrison to whom it had been sent, who were sadly in need of the stores it contained. It was the more annoying, as Darnier was considered the most acute officer in the service.

"The devil!" roared Rawdon. "Up, and away, Bannister. Take these men who have escaped with you, and spare not horse-flesh until you run them down. When you find them, you will know what to do."

"I think so," said Tarleton, with a smile, which boded no good to the Whigs, if they came in his way. "Let me manage that. Do you think you can guide me to the spot where the battle took place?" he continued, addressing the soldier.



"Yes, sir."

"Then come along. To horse, gentlemen, you who follow me, and the d—l take me if I do not drive these fellows to the wall. What will you do with this fellow in the white sheet?"

"I'm a poor fool," put in the idiot, driveling.

"Let him go," replied Rawdon. "Away; no time is to be lost."

In five minutes he heard the departing hoofs of Tarleton's horse, bound in pursuit of Surrey's Riders.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MIDNIGHT VISIT.

JAKE, the negro attendant of Maud Carroll, returned to tell his mistress about what had happened in the village, and to recount the singular doings of the strange being who professed to be sent to call the world to repentance. He was voluble in his narration, dwelling upon the wild manner of the idiot, and the manner in which he had bearded the lion in his den. While narrating this fact, his mistress saw a folded paper in the pocket of his jacket, and pointed it out.

"What is that?" she said.

"What?"

"The paper in your pocket. Has some one sent a message which you have forgotten?"

"I ain't got no let— Fo' de Lord! Wha' dat come from?"

A paper protruded from his pocket.

"You ridiculous fellow, some one gave it to you and you have forgotten it."

"No dey didn't, so dar. Tek it ef you want it. I donno nothing 'bout him, I don't. 'Tain't none of mine, so dar."

Maud took it from his pocket, and found it a folded note, directed to her. She opened it and read:



"MY DEAR MISS CARROLL:—Your sympathy for the cause which I support to the best of my poor ability makes me wish to meet you again, because I think you would wish to do something for that cause. It is in your power, now, and if you can grant me an interview to-night, I will tell you how circumstances over which I had no control forced me to leave without visiting you as I had intended, and I think when I explain it you will not blame me. I shall so far trespass upon your good-nature as to take it for granted you will think proper to grant my request. I send this by a hand which never fails, and he will see that it gets to you."

"CHARLES SURREY."

"I tell you wot I t'ink, missee," said the negro. "You juss take an' frow dat letter away now while I speaks wid you. Dat's a ghost letter, dat is. I don't speak wid no one in Camden, an' so de ghosts mus' bring him. Frow him away."

"Nonsense. You can go now; and do not speak of this."

"You'd better frow dat 'way," muttered Jake, as he slowly left the room. Maud Carroll sat for some moments holding the letter and thinking over the request. This young man had, in a single interview, done more to break down the barriers about a hitherto unconquered heart, than any other man had ever done. He had come to her rescue at a timely moment, and had borne himself bravely against great odds, simply because she was a woman and a Carolinian. Then he was fighting for the freedom of the land she so dearly loved, and she was a woman who had gone heart and soul into the cause of America. She made her decision, and it was to give him the opportunity he desired. Perhaps her dreams led her to hope that something more might come of this, but she kept that in her own heart.

But would he come to her, when he knew that the village was full of the English, and even his life might pay the forfeit if taken? He had just struck them a damaging blow, and she knew well that Lord Rawdon would not stand long upon points of law if he could have an opportunity of repaying the injury he had received. She did not understand how he could come without falling into terrible danger. True, the mansion was somewhat isolated, and he need not enter the village; but when the pickets were placed they would extend



beyond the house, and he would be continually in danger. There were many things to puzzle her in this strange missive. He appointed no time nor place, but simply said he would come, as if he had no fear. While she sat in the veranda, she heard a deep voice singing along the road, and directly after the singer came in view. She saw in a moment that it was the idiot of whom Jake had spoken. He still wore his white sheet, and as he saw her, raised his arms like wings and shook them, keeping up the same chant.

"Ha, ha, my pretty lady," he cried, "there's a crown for such as you in the kingdom. You do not love to see the red blood flow, nor to hear the blare of trumpet or the beat of drum. I love it, because my mission is war. Listen: I see a black cloud hanging over the Britains, and it will burst soon. Woe, woe to them when it comes!"

"My poor fellow," said Maud, kindly, "I am glad to see you have sense enough to love a noble cause. Are you hungry?"

"Yes, pretty lady. I am a poor fool; but the General gives me a fine body-guard to see me safe out of Camden. I ran faster than they did, and they are coming now."

As he spoke, two foot-soldiers came round a bend hurriedly, and one of them caught him by the shoulder.

"Be careful what you do, my fine fellow," said he, "or you will get into trouble. Do not run away again."

"But I wanted to see the pretty lady," whined the idiot, his jaw dropping again. "I am a poor fool, and you ought not to use me so roughly."

"Treat him kindly, gentlemen," said Maud. "Remember he is not accountable for what he does or says, and always feel for the affliction God has seen fit to lay upon him. I have asked him to stop and get something to eat, and I should be pleased to extend the same invitation to you."

"If you had added something to drink, miss, I would say done," said the soldier who had spoken, and who was a little inclined to be impudent. "What do you say?"

Maud, who had a kindly heart, did not let the impudence of the fellow keep her from doing a good deed. She led the way to the kitchen, and ordered the servants to bring food and drink.



"What drink do you prefer, gentlemen?" she said. "Do not be afraid to ask for what you want."

"Brandy for me, if you have the good taste to keep that comfortable creature in the house," said the spokesman. "Our duty ends here, for we were only ordered to see this man to the outposts, and the last picket will be placed just in front of the house."

"I'll take Madeira," said the other. "She called us gentlemen, and for once I will drink a gentleman's drink."

Jake took the key of the wine-vault and returned in a moment, carrying a flask of brandy and a dusty old bottle of Madeira, which had not seen the light for thirty years. The Carrolls were an old family, and had once been the heirs of one of the old baronies created in colonial days, when men dreamed of an empire here in the West, and this wine, like that of which Dickens speaks in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, "seemed to have been bottled in the golden age, and had hoarded up its sparkle ever since."

The soldiers ate and drank freely, and then strolled out, without thanking Maud. She drew a long breath when they had gone.

"Throw away those glasses they have been drinking from," she said. "I will not have them in my house since they have been filled in honor of that beast, George the Third. Have you every thing you want, poor man?"

The idiot, who had been enjoying himself at a side-table, looked up as she spoke.

"Pretty lady," he said, "I have all I want. I am a poor fool, but I know when I see a lady who has a kind heart. Sometimes I know more than at other times. I am going away now. There is something I have been trying to remember, and what it is I can not think. Yes, this is it. Come close and I will whisper it in your ear."

She approached him and bent her head. She started violently as he whispered:

"At five o'clock in the morning, be at the large oak behind the negro-quarters. This from Charles Sarrey."

"Who are you, strange man?" she cried, looking at him more closely.

"I am a poor fool," replied the idiot, looking at the negroes



who were staring at him, open-mouthed. "I met a man upon the river this day, and he told me to find the most beautiful woman in Camden, and say that to her. Is it right? Do you understand it?"

"Yes."

"I don't; I am an idiot. Good-by now, for I must go away."

Before she could say a word to detain him, as she would have done, the door had closed behind him, and he passed on up the road, singing as before, and never looking back. Maud ran to the window and watched him until his stalwart figure was hidden behind the next rise of ground.

Darkness was coming on, and the British lines were extended. She could see the tall form of a sentry pacing his lonely beat within a dozen yards of the house. Maud feared that some evil might happen from his presence, and watched him closely. It galled her to see this myrmidon of British power in arms upon her father's land, but she could do nothing to prevent it. As she stood watching him, she saw a man pass the window, and directly after a knock came at the door. She did not move from where she stood until a servant came down announcing a gentleman waiting to see her.

"What gentleman?" she said.

"Ossifer!" replied Jake.

"A British officer?"

"Iss, missee. Say you be grad to see him," said the negro.

Maud went up to the parlor and found Major Darnier waiting to receive her. She was surprised to see him, of course, but did not show it.

"To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit, sir?"

"I have a message to deliver, Miss Carroll," replied the major, with an easy politeness which sat well upon him. "I should have delivered it before, but that an unforeseen accident prevented it."

"I have heard that you have been in affliction since you left Camden," said Maud, wickedly. "You have had a difficulty with some of these rugged fellows in the swamp."

"You are hard upon me, Miss Carroll. Do me the justice to believe that I never was guilty of the meanness of attempting to belittle our adversaries. I am willing to allow the



they are brave men fighting for a false idea, which they must relinquish because we have the power."

"We will not argue upon the subject, sir," she said. "You have not stated the object of your visit."

"In Charleston I have a cousin with whom you have been intimate, Miss Rachel Darton by name. She gave me a letter to you, which I deliver. But I have had the honor of seeing you before."

"Ah?" said Maud, running her eye over the note he gave her. "I do not remember."

"It was in Charleston last year at the ball given by Balfour."

"I was introduced to so many gentlemen with red coats that you must excuse me for being bewildered by such a blaze of manly grace and innocence. This note introduces you in due form, Major Darnier, and at any time you may choose to call you shall be made welcome, although, if the truth must be told, I expected you would remain longer with our friends in the swamp. I did indeed."

"I took French leave of my quondam friends, Miss Maud. They were very pressing in their hospitalities, but I could not accept them for any great length of time. Once in the swamp, I managed to elude the vigilance of my guards, and you see me here. There is one thing I will say, and that is, if I ever have the good fortune to meet that worthy youth who had the honor of saving you from the insolence of some of my officers, I will try to repay in some sort the injury he has done me."

"He will doubtless be as ready to meet you, major. I give you fair warning that it will be a duel *à l'outrance* between us, for I am a Whig, heart and soul."

"Unconverted yet. I am sorry to hear it, but will try to convert you. I must bid you good-night, as I must go upon duty. Lord Rawdon has waived an examination of my conduct until after this campaign, and I am on duty again. My company is woefully weak. I shall endeavor to cultivate an acquaintance begun under rude auspices. Good-night."

As he passed out into the road he paused, and a dark smile flitted over his handsome face. "Yes, proud beauty, I have registered an oath. You shall be mine though a score of rebel colonels stood between us. Courage, *mon ami*. You have



never yet been beaten in the end, and why falter now? Look to yourselves, for I am sworn, and God do so to me as I will keep my oath."

Maud, after the departure of the major, went into her own room and lay down to rest until the hour arrived for the meeting. The inopportune escape of Darnier annoyed her a little, for she foresaw that he might give them trouble, for his reputation had gone before him, and she knew he was a keen and active man. Though she affected to have forgotten him, she was well aware that he had seen and admired her in Charleston, and Rachel Darten's letters had informed her that he had not ceased to rave about her still.

As morning drew near she arose and looked from the window. It was a clear morning, and she could see objects distinctly many yards distant. The huge sycamore-tree appointed for the interview was half concealed from view by the negro-quarters, and stood some three hundred yards from the road. When the time came, she wrapped a cloak about her, and opening the back door, stole out into the grounds, looking cautiously about her to satisfy herself that no one observed her. All was silent about the plantation, and she advanced a few paces and listened again. Still she could hear no sound, and at last, satisfied that no one was stirring, she stole silently away, passed the negro-quarters, and reached the tree.

"Hist!" cried a low voice. "Is that you, Miss Maud?"

"Yes, yes."

A man darted from the bushes and extended his hand. She gave him both hers, and he raised them to his lips with a courtly grace which is fast passing away among men.

She blushed and drew her hands gently away.

"Pardon me, I entreat," said Surrey, for it was indeed he. "Your kindness in coming to meet me makes me so grateful that I must express it in some way."

"I am not angry," she said, softly. "But, oh, why do you come here, when you know the terrible danger you undergo? You have made enemies for my sake, and I would not have you come here while they remain."

"All men have enemies. I do not fear them, I hope, more than most men. What particular enemies have I?"

"The man against whom you defended me when I met you



first is a vindictive, low-bred, villainous wretch. He has that reputation in Charleston even among his mates. He will hesitate at no crime by which he may do you an injury."

"No doubt; but his worship is safe in the swamp under guard of my best men, and can not escape."

"Major Darnier—"

"Also in durance vile."

"He has escaped."

"Impossible."

"I saw him to-night."

"Ha; I am sorry for that, for Major Darnier is a man who is better bound than free. Did he tell you how he escaped?"

"No; he merely said he eluded the vigilance of his guards."

"I can not think he would break his parole," muttered Surrey. "But he had given it before I left. It is an odd thing and I can not fathom it now. Let it pass until I see my major, and he must explain to my satisfaction how it was that this officer managed to escape. But, even this is nothing now. I have a plan which I hope will do great injury to our enemies, and in which you can aid me. The question is, will you do it?"

"I ask nothing better than to be able to do something for the cause of freedom," she said. "Try me, if you will. I am but a woman, and yet I think I could dare much in such a cause as this. Will you give me the opportunity? Ah, if all the women of our dear land were of my mind, and you would suffer it, we would take our places in the field and fight, if need be, with what little strength we have."

"Now, by my life," cried Surrey, striking his palms together, "who dares to say we can be conquered, when the country contains women as brave as this? If our men had half their spirit, the country would have been rid of the invaders long ago. Now, if you will listen attentively, I will tell you what I mean to do. Ha! who stirs the leaves? Get to the house as quickly as you can, for I am surrounded."

"Make no movement until I can be your escort, my dear Miss Maud," said the voice of Darnier. "I am sorry to be the means of interrupting so pleasant a *tête-à-tête*, but really I have no option. You will be pleased to consider yourself my prisoner, Colonel Conyers."



"Conyers!" cried Maud. "Oh, heavens, why did you come here to-night?"

"Bright eyes, before his time, have lured brave men to their ruin, and why not yours?" said Darnier. "Colonel Conyers, a change has come over the spirit of your dream. Yesterday, I told you that the laugh would not always be on your side, and you see I was right. The tables are turned, and I fear you will find your position a delicate one. Man, how could you have the impudence to be caught within our lines?"

"Within your lines! It is false, sir. Your outmost picket is on the other side of the house, and you know that you do not state the truth, when you say I am within your lines. But do not exult so quickly. You claim no bird until you have caught it, and I am yet to be caught. Take that!"

As he said this, he dealt the major a blow with his clenched hand, which laid him prostrate; and then, drawing his sword, he bounded over the prostrate form, and tried to gain the woods. The four men whom the major led rushed at him, and quicker than a man could have spoken two words, the foremost two lay bleeding on the sod, one desperately wounded, and the other stunned by a cut upon the head. By this time the major had regained his feet, and with a snarl like that of a wounded tiger, called out to his men to fall back, and give him room. The next moment, with a sharp hiss, the steel blades crossed, and the two men fought in the presence of the woman whom each admired more than any woman he had ever seen. Charles Surrey Conyers was known in the American army as a perfect Bayard, a man "*sans peur et sans reproche*," a finished swordsman, a perfect horseman, and a cool but daring leader. On the other hand, Darnier was second to few in the British army in sword-play, and had a keen eye, a pliant wrist, and the long arms which appertain to the finished swordsman. Maud knew this well, and almost trembled for her champion as she saw the two men cross swords. The feeling was but momentary, however, for she saw that he was cool and steady, even smiling as he parried the continued assaults of Darnier. Scarcely moving after his first traverse, he stood upon his guard, and as he swept his keen point from side to side, nothing except his wrist and hand seemed to



move, and that was pliant as steel. That blade seemed to form a wall of steel about him, which it was impossible to break through, and Darnier felt that he was fighting against a man who was complete master of his weapon. In vain—

“He practiced every pass and ward,  
To thrust, to strike, to feint, to guard—

for that keen blade met him at every point. The two soldiers, obeying the command of their leader, remained a little apart, but one of them had a loaded musket, and held it ready to fire in case the young soldier of the republic proved too strong for his leader. Still the weapons hissed and flashed, in lines of lambent light, and Darnier felt his strength going. Then it was that Charles Conyers seemed to rouse himself and assume the offensive. He threw himself forward, and began an attack which was as surprising as it was annoying to his adversary, who fell back before it, vainly attempting to withstand it. He was already twice slightly wounded, and the soldier was raising his weapon to his shoulder, when a wild cry resounded, and a huge form bounded from the thicket, and at a single blow, beat down the man who held the musket, which went off as he fell. A second blow felled the other man, just as Conyers wrested the blade of Darnier from his hand, and bore him down upon his knee. “The sword of the Lord and Gideon!” cried the new-comer, and Maud saw that it was the strange man who had visited her that afternoon.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BITER BIT.

MAUD, with a joyful cry, ran to him and took his hand. He motioned her off, and stood a moment looking quickly about him. “I will not ask you how you escaped from my men, Major Darnier,” cried Conyers, turning to his vanquished enemy. “That would be idle now, and could do no good. But of this be assured, I am willing to meet you upon any ground whereon the sun shines, with any weapon you choose to name



But that I saw you sneaking in the bushes, I might have betrayed a secret which would have done a wrong to the cause I follow. As for you, your ill-timed haste spoiled all."

"Who is this devil who has come in so suddenly, and destroyed all my labor?" hissed the major, almost beside himself with rage. "Madmen and fools will ruin me. Yesterday an accursed Yankee led me into an ambush, and to-night, this madman has taken my prey out of my hands. Who are you?"

"I am a poor fool," said the idiot.

"Then let me give a little good advice, which I hope you will have wit enough to profit by. Let me never see your face again, for if I ever meet you, madman or wise man, I will hang you as sure as my name is Ransom Darnier. So look to yourself."

"Your road lies yonder," said Conyers, pointing forward with his sword toward Camden. "We can not make you prisoner to-night, because you would only incumber us. Go."

Darnier turned, with a wicked smile upon his face, and walked quickly toward the village. "Come away," cried Conyers, "there is no time to lose. Miss Maud, God in heaven bless you for your sympathy in our cause, and may the time come soon when I can thank you better. The red-coats are stirring, and I hear the tramp of hoofs. Farewell for the present, but if I live, we shall meet again."

"Who is this man, Colonel Conyers? He is not mad, I hope."

I can not tell you now. Trust him always with messages to me, if you need aid, and be sure they will reach me. Hal! Here they come."

He darted into the thicket, and the next moment appeared in the saddle, followed by the idiot, who had thrown off the sheet, which would incumber him in riding. At the same moment forty or fifty of a Tory company, led by Darnier, cleared the low fence in front of the mansion, and caught sight of them.

"There they go!" screamed Darnier. "Mark that devil on the black horse. Fifty guineas for either, dead or alive."

With wild shouts the whole Tory band rushed by, making the air vocal with imprecations upon the impudent Whigs



who had dared to beard them in their very den. Maud fell upon her knees and prayed that they might escape, and waited until the sound of hoofs had died away in the distance, and the last shout, faintly echoed, was heard across the plantation. Five hundred yards at the start was all that separated the two flying men from enemies whose tender mercies were the direst cruelties. Whig and Tory! Only those who lived in that terrible time can guess the hate which filled the breast of one party against the other.

The Tories gained upon the fugitives so much that scarce a hundred yards separated them, and they were plainly visible in front. The idiot was riding a powerful black horse, far superior to the one ridden by his companion, and could easily have left him far behind. But, with unheard-of bravery in a man of his class, he was seen to pull hard upon the bit, and keep down the pace of the animal to correspond with that of Conyers, who, though well mounted, rode no such beast as the idiot.

"Confound his impudence!" cried Darnier. "Take a shot at the fellow from the saddle, Frobisher."

The man addressed—a sallow, lean-visaged sand-lapper—drew his rifle to his shoulder and fired, even while upon the bound. The ball flew wide of the person aimed at, and struck the horse Conyers rode at the base of the skull, leveling him in a moment. Only the skillful horsemanship of Conyers saved him from being crushed by the fall of the animal, and even as it was, his foot was entangled for a moment, and he could not readily extricate it. There was no time for words. The idiot leaped from the saddle, while the triumphant shout of the Tories was yet ringing in his ears, and catching his companion by the waist, he lifted the powerful young man from the ground, and swung him into the saddle, giving the horse a slap on the flank. As he bounded away, the idiot turned and sent a defiant cry back at the Tories before he plunged into the thick woods that bordered the way.

Conyers saw that it was useless to return, and he trusted to the man who had, with such powerful friendship, given up his horse, to make his escape. He knew the ground well, and that one or the other must have taken to the woods before long. The black horse, maddened by the blow he had received, was



placing too great a distance between Conyers and his pursuers, and this was hardly his cue. A dozen of the Tory band turned their horses into the woods in pursuit of the footman, while the rest continued the chase of Conyers.

For five miles, by pulling hard at the bit, the Colonel managed to keep their relative positions unchanged. They were now approaching a deep wood, into which a narrow path turned. Conyers guided the noble animal he rode into this opening, slackening his pace as he did so. They followed at full speed, and the last man had hardly passed out of sight, when thirty horsemen sprung from the thicket and followed softly.

Just then came the crack of rifles, and the wild shout of the riders of Conyers. The Tories were assailed front, flank and rear, ridden down, horse and man, and exterminated unsparingly. They were a portion of the band known as the "Bloody Scout," led by a fiend in human shape named Cunningham, who, by their atrocities, had placed themselves without the pale of mercy. There was no restraining the savage instincts of the Whigs when face to face with these atrocious villains.

Hemmed in on every side, they turned upon their assailants with the courage of desperation, and fought as only men can fight when that is their only choice. A chosen few, banded about the person of Darnier, whose presence was a strong tower to them, broke through the ranks of their enemies, and gained the woods. Then the cry was, "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Darnier, by dint of hard riding and knowledge of the ground, made his escape and came out of the forest not far from the place where the dead horse lay, where he was joined by the men who had turned aside in pursuit of the idiot. One of them never came back. Whether he sunk in the dark pools of the swamp, or was killed by the strange man they pursued, his comrades never knew.

Four more of the Tories came into camp before morning, all that was left of the band. Darnier, almost heart-broken by the many crosses he had been forced to bear in these two days, returned to camp and reported. Rawdon looked black at the news.

"What is the matter with you, Major Darnier? You were

Wh  
momen  
trouble



not wont to run your head into traps in this reckless manner."

"My lord," said Darnier, eagerly, "my zeal may have led me astray, but I aimed to serve his majesty faithfully. I am certain this idiot is some scout of the enemy, and of wonderful address. He must be so indeed to deceive even your lordship."

"Pshaw! this is even worse than the rest. If ever there was a born idiot, this man is one; I sounded him myself."

"But a fellow who can seize a man like Conyers by the waist and put him into the saddle like a child, can certainly be useful to the enemy."

"No doubt, no doubt. There it is again. This man Conyers, who has done all this evil, has escaped again. If we could have kept the fellow, I would have hung him as an example to all rebels and traitors who think of coming into my lines. What bugles are those, orderly? Go out and see, and report at once."

The man was gone but a moment.

"Colonel Tarleton is coming into camp, your lordship," he said. "He wishes to report."

"Admit him."

Tarleton came in flushed and angry, tapping his sword-hilt in a manner peculiar to him when under the influence of strong excitement.

"Now, Bannister?" cried Rawdon.

"My lord, this fellow has stolen a march upon us, and is in our rear with nearly a hundred men. He struck the train of our wagons under charge of Lieutenant Grover yesterday afternoon, took twenty men and the lieutenant. One man only escaped, who reports this loss."

"The devil. And now he has cut up forty or fifty of Cunningham's men under Major Darnier. The impudence of these fellows passes belief. They had better not drive me to extremities. If they do, if I do not lay Camden even with the ground, may I never see—"

Whatever he meant to say was never spoken, for at that moment the rattle of rifles and rush of men announced fresh trouble. Rawdon darted out to find the camp in confusion,



and officers hurrying about trying to quell the tumult. It was some moments before they could make out what had happened. Then the tumult ceased, and an officer came in to report.

"An attack on the pickets, your lordship, by a squadron of horse."

"What casualties, sir?"

"Three men of the Tenth killed and four wounded, one of them desperately. Ten men missing."

"Who is officer of the night?"

"I, your lordship."

"Did you hear no disturbance before the attack?"

"No, sir. It came and went before five minutes had passed by. They rode over the pickets, cut them down and took them prisoners before any thing could be done."

"Did you take any prisoners?"

"A single man, your lordship. Will it please you to see him?"

"Yes; have him in at once," said Rawdon, malignantly, a savage smile lighting up his face. "This is almost enough to atone for the capture of the men. I will make such an example of this traitor that he shall rather wish himself in the regions of the lost than in my hands. Orderly, go out and bring him here."

There was a silence of some moments, during which Tarleton did not cease to tap his sword-hilt, and Rawdon remained with his head upon his hand, in deep thought. Steps sounded without, and a man came in closely guarded, and stood near the door, looking about with a calm smile. It was Blacksmith Tom who had fallen into the hands of the enemy, but he did not seem to care much about it.

"Here I am, gentlemen. Now if I may ask the question, what have you got to say to me? Don't keep me waiting."



## CHAPTER X.

## BLACKSMITH TOM'S DANGER.

AT the sight of this man, so cool, calm, self-reliant, all the angry passions which had been seething all that day in the bosom of Lord Rawdon boiled over.

"Now, by my life, your impudence passes all belief, fellow. Gentlemen, do you know this man?"

"I know him, my lord," said Darnier, coming forward with a malicious smile upon his face, "and I am sorry to say I can report no good of him. He is a blacksmith, who—"

"I knowed Major Darnier before," said Matthews, interrupting him. "Shod his hosses before he went out with the convoy. Colonel Conyers has got them hosses now. He got some more the same arternoon, and some more last night."

"Be silent, fellow. Do not wag your tongue too much in this room, or I may cut it out."

"Would you?" said Matthews. "That may be a good way to do it. But, if I had a hundred tongues, and was like to lose them all, I'd have my say out. Yes, I *am* Blacksmith Tom—old Tom Matthews, the swamp scout; I boast of it, and am prouder of it than I would be if I could have your rank this day."

"Then you confess that you are a traitor?"

"Confess it? No! Traitor I am none, for men who are fighting on their own soil, for their own liberties, can not be traitors. Look at these hands, Lord Rawdon. They are made hard and brown by toil, honest toil, but they never yet struck a blow—and they have struck many a one—which was not on the side of freedom."

"Are you ready to die?"

"Look you, sir. I'm getting on in years, and have worked hard and lived hard. A rough, plain man I may be, but I never did a wicked or dishonest act to my knowledge. I hope I am as ready to die when my time comes as any man here, but I don't hanker arter it; that I tell you plain."



"You have reached the end of your journey. Major Darnier, go out and get a file of men, and lead this man out to execution. Hang him to the tree in front of this house, and let him stay all day as an example to the loyal people of Camden."

"Since I must die, let me die a soldier's death, not a criminal's. Order out your file of men, if you will, but let them bring their muskets and shoot me. I'll not flinch."

"As you like. Choose your mode of death. Away with him, and have the army drawn up in a hollow square to see him die. While you prepare, ask the landlord for the keys of the cellar, and lock him up under guard. I trust you with that duty, Captain Sinclair. Break up here."

The officers left the room, and Tom Matthews was led out, guarded. There was a lofty look in his noble face, which sent a thrill into the breasts of all who looked upon it, and they could but think they had to look upon the death of a brave man. Uncle Ben, with tears in his eyes, showed the way to the cellar, and locked the door. Tom's heart gave a great bound as he saw the place in which they had put him, but fell again when he found that they had placed a guard inside the door. This guard was a stolid-looking Englishman, who glared at the prisoner so savagely, that the blacksmith knew how useless it was to expect a favor from him.

An hour passed on, the key grated in the lock, and he thought they had come to lead him forth to die. But, he was mistaken; instead of the guard, he heard the rustle of a woman's garments.

Maud Carroll, attended by Major Darnier, entered the cellar. The beautiful face, so full of compassion for him in his desperate strait, did for Tom Matthews what the fear of death could never have done, unmanned him. He felt his eyes growing dim and he covered his face.

"Guard," said Darnier, "come with me."

The two were alone together.

"I am sorry to see you here, Tom," she said. "How did it happen?"

"'Twas an accident, Miss Maud," said the blacksmith. "You see, we charged the pickets and I was taken, that's the long and short of it."



"Oh, Tom, you good, brave man, can nothing be done to save you?"

"I don't reckon you can do any thing. Darnier sot them against me harder than they would have been, and mebbe I was a little stiff in my way of talking to them. I couldn't stand their airs."

"But, I can not suffer this to go on. I will go to Lord Rawdon, whom I know well, and intercede for you. I will tell him what a brave man you are, and that you have not done any thing worthy of death. They have not even tried you."

"And what's more, they never mean to. Lord love your heart, they couldn't prove a thing against me, though if they knew all, they might have reason on their side. Let me tell you that it's no use to appeal to Lord Rawdon. He is a bilious, sour, discontented fool; that's about what he is."

"But I must go to him, Tom. He was once my father's friend, and may listen to me on that account. Be of good heart, for I may save you yet."

"Whether you do or not, Miss Maud, you have lightened my labor and made death easy. God bless and keep you."

She went out weeping and the guard came back. Rawdon was in the room in which he had examined the scout, bending over a mass of papers, when the orderly came in to announce that Maud Carroll wished to speak with him.

The result of this interview the blacksmith too truly foretold. Rawdon offered to release Tom, and give him a position in Darnier's dragoons, if he would promise to lead Tarleton to the haunt of young Conyers. This roused Maud's indignation, and Rawdon recoiled at the words of contempt which burst from the brave girl's tongue at so insulting a proposal. The painful interview ended in anger, and the order was issued in Maud's presence for Darnier to instantly lead out the prisoner for execution—so hard-hearted had war made the once gallant Rawdon.

The population of Camden were on the housetops, and in every place where they could see plainly, when Blacksmith Tom was led out to die. Suddenly, as if wrung from them by his noble bearing, a sounding cheer went up for him, which he returned by a wave of the hand. The muffled drums beat as he was marched down the line of red-coats, never looking at



them. The sun shone brightly now when he was looking on his last sunrise. It never looked so beautiful as now.

"Ask him if he has any thing to say before he dies, Darnier. And give him the chance I spoke of."

Darnier approached the brave man as he stood beside his coffin, and made him the offer Rawdon had made to Maud. Tom heard him calmly to the end, and then, raising his hand, dealt him such a buffet that he dropped like a dead man.

"Take *that* for an answer, minions of England, who dare insult a dying man by asking him to turn traitor to save his worthless life. If you could give me all the gold your vile king can count as the price of my treason, crown-jewels and all, you could not buy me. Now then, are you satisfied?"

They raised Darnier and carried him away, while Rawdon signed to another officer to take charge of the execution. While the firing party were making their pieces ready, Matthews stood beside his coffin as coolly as if all this was sport to him, and nothing more than he was accustomed to. "Let all men remember," he cried, "that nothing has been charged against me, nor have I ever had the form of a trial. I am deemed guilty unto death and this is the end. Good friends in this town of Camden, who have known me so long and thought so kindly of me, good-by. When you sit beside your hearths as the years go by, when America is free, tell your children how Blacksmith Tom died for his country. I shall not see the end I have prayed for, but I have stood upon the mountain-top and looked into the promised land. Good-by, one and all. Now, minions of a despotic and *idiotic* king, do your worst; I am ready."

Again Rawdon made a signal, unheeding Maud, who was clinging to his knees and praying him to have mercy, and the men drew up in line before the doomed man.

"Are you ready?" said the officer.

"Ready!" replied the corporal.

"Present," said the officer. "Take aim at the body when you fire. Look out for the word. Now—"

Before he could pronounce the fatal word there came a wild cry, and they saw a man coming at full speed down the line, urging his horse to the utmost, and waving something white above his head. Rawdon motioned to stay the execution.



## CHAPTER XI.

### DARNIER'S WOOING.

"Fire!" cried the blacksmith. "I am ready to die, if you dare to kill me."

All turned to the new-comer in surprise, and the residents of Camden recognized Dan Malony. His eye glanced over the assembled crowd and saw that his friend was safe, and then he turned toward the place where Rawdon stood, with a look which boded no good to him.

"Bring that fellow here," said the Commander-in-Chief.

Dan advanced at once and stood face to face with the English General, holding a folded paper in his hand.

"What do you want, fellow?" said Rawdon. "Who sent you here?"

"Sure, the paper will tell ye that," said Dan, giving it to him. "Rade it, and thin tell me what ye mane to do. Sorra til ye an' til the likes av ye, aff ye had killed Blacksmith Tom."

Rawdon took the paper from his hand and glanced over it hastily. It began abruptly:

"TO LORD RAWDON:

"If you dare to harm my friend and fellow-soldier, Tom Matthews, otherwise known as the Blacksmith of Camden, I will execute in the same way in which you execute him, a major, a captain and lieutenant, now in my hands. Ask your officers who have heard of me whether I am likely to keep my word.

"CHARLES SURREY CONYERS, Colonel of Partisan Rangers."

The dark face of Rawdon took on a savage look as he read this singularly offensive missive. He passed it to Tarleton and asked him to read it to the other officers.

"What do you think of it?" he said.

"From what I know of this Conyers I should say he would be very likely to keep his word," replied Tarleton.

"Would he *dare* do that?"

"There is a price upon his head already, and he would not



be likely to hesitate in so slight a matter as the life or death of three officers," was the answer.

"Whom has he taken?"

"Major Withers, Captain Luther and Lieutenants Bilton and Curry," said Tarleton.

"Then what is your advice?"

"To keep this fellow a prisoner until these officers are exchanged, and then deal with him as you see fit."

"I would sooner cut off my hand than yield an inch to this rebel, but it must be done, I suppose. Major Darnier take this man back to the cellar in which he was placed before, and if it seems strong enough, leave him there until the army moves. The execution is deferred."

"And what shall be done with this fellow who brought the message? I know him, my lord, and he is a sort of henchman of this blacksmith."

"I w'u'dn't put a hand on me aff I was you. The colonel thinks so mighty well av me that he said aff ye was to touch me he'd make wan av thim officers answer fer me. He's a divil av a fellow, is the colonel."

"Let him alone," said Rawdon. "Return to your master and say that we have yielded to his demand for the sake of the officers he would murder. But, that I design to retain him as prisoner until duly exchanged."

"The colonel w'u'd exchange any man av the officers fer him," said Dan.

"Major Withers?"

"Any wan. He'd sooner let ye have back Captain Luther because he's a fine lad, an' we think a great dale av him. Ye've a man among ye that broke his parole av honor an' ran away—him they call Major Darnier."

"You lie!" shouted Darnier, who had come out upon the veranda, turning livid. "I gave up my parole."

"Don't tell me I lie, ye black thafe, or I'll knock the head av ye ag'in' the walls. Ye *did* break yer parole, an' ye know it. Til the divil wid ye, an' may he pad your saddle wherever ye ride. No matter for that. Good-by, ould Tom. We won't l'ave ye long in prison."

"Never mind me," replied Tom. "Thank you fer coming, ould lad. I thought I had my pass this time. A man can't



come nearer than when he hears 'ready—aim!' Look out that some of these thieves don't follow you."

"They'd better not thry that on," said Dan. "I'll lade them such a chase as they never heard av before."

"Stop that," said Rawdon. "Give this Irishman free passage, Major Dugrange, and see that no one follows him. Take good care of this spy, Major Darnier, for it may be in our power to punish him yet."

Tom grinned widely, and waved his hand to the crowd as they led him into the house and to his old prison. The door was locked upon him and the key given to the guard.

As the evening came on, Darnier walked down to the residence of Maud Carroll. He found her alone, and she received him with a latent fire in her eyes which did not bode any good to him. But, she was bred a lady, and received him as a lady should receive a gentleman, even though upon the wrong side, and showed him into the parlor. She did not seem much in the mood for talking, and he was forced to take the lead.

"I am conscious of having appeared to a disadvantage in your eyes lately," he said. "I deplore it, the more because if there is any one whose good opinion I covet, more than another, it is yours. How can I set myself right in your eyes?"

"I would not go into that subject if I were you, Major Darnier," she said, coldly. "Suffer me to receive you as the friend of my cousin, and not as a gentleman fighting against the cause I love."

"I too should be glad to put this unhappy quarrel out of the question," said the major. "It is better for all concerned. But, that is not what I wished to speak of. You are angry with me because I attempted the capture of that young traitor known as Charles Surrey, a name we now know to be assumed."

"The attempt recoiled upon yourself," she replied, "and I do not know that I have any good reason to be angry with you for that. You only did your duty."

"As you say, it failed. I may succeed better another time, for I will not attempt to conceal from you that I mean to follow him to the bitter death. I will teach him that Ransom Darnier is not a man easily baffled or overcome."



"Did you come to tell me this?"

"I came to set myself right in your eyes."

"You take a strange way of doing it when you announce yourself the deadly enemy of one of my friends."

"How can it be otherwise? He has disgraced me in a manner for which there is no atonement except his downfall; he has beaten me at both saber and small-sword, broken up my squadron, captured the train of which I was guard, twice drawn me into an ambuscade, and shaken the faith of my superiors in my ability."

"Yet I have heard him speak highly of your merits as a soldier. In Charleston, every tongue was loud in your praise. A brave man should not show hatred for another because he has been more fortunate than he in battle."

"It is not that entirely," he muttered. "There is something deeper, dating before the time when I first saw him."

"That can hardly be."

"Shall I explain?" he asked.

"It is hardly worth your while, I should think," she answered, running her fingers lightly over the strings of the harp upon which her hand rested. "Come, let me sing you a song and say no more of this matter. What shall it be?"

"Of love," he said, "the lever which moves the world."

"Nay," she replied. "I sing no love-ditties now. Here is a rude ballad which a wild poet sung, under the greenwood bough. You shall hear it, if you like:

"We ride by glen and hazel-tree,  
By swamp and leafy cover;  
A wild and careless band are we,  
When we by camp-fires hover.  
But when the 'spirit-stirring drum'  
Rings out its loud alarm;  
From bush and brake and heath we come,  
And never think of harm.

Our band is few, but frank and free,  
Each loving as a brother;  
We dwell beneath the cypress-tree,  
In kindness to each other.  
When night comes down upon the land,  
And heaven's blue vault is o'er us,  
Oh, then comes forth our faithful band,  
The Tory quails before us."



"I cry enough," he said, raising his hand; "it is hardly fair in you to take advantage of my position and force me to hear songs of that kind. Good faith, I can not say much for the poet. Let the harp rest for a moment, for I have something to say to you, and must say it now. I came to Camden with a purpose which I have not explained to you. I have told you that we met in Charleston, where my cousin Rachel—"

"And, honor bright, is she not a lovely girl, Major Darnier? Does Mrs. Rivington give her parties yet?"

"Mrs. Rivington is under a cloud at present, because it is believed that David Ramsay, the historian, has visited there."

"And the Harveys are there, I suppose? One can not but admire them, though they are on the wrong side."

"But, Miss Maud—"

"Positively, I will not hear a word until you tell me about Charleston, where I spent so delightful a month. It is a beautiful place, though vandal hands are on its walls."

"Miss Maud, I *must* speak."

"How tiresome you are! Of course I want you to speak, but you must let me choose the topics myself. I vote we talk of Charleston to-night, and you shall give me an account of all the glories of the city since I have forsworn its pleasures, on account of so much feathers and red-coats. Somehow, they seem to blot the face of nature."

"It is idle for you to try to put me off in this way, Maud Carroll," said the major, sternly; "you do not know my disposition or you would understand that I am untiring when I make up my mind."

Maud knew perfectly what he wanted, and tried to spare him, but he was determined to meet his fate.

"I will listen to you, sir," she said, drawing herself up slightly. "Go on."

It was rather an unpromising beginning, and Darnier felt it so; but he had gone too far to recede, and broke out into a passionate declaration of love, which it was hard for any woman to resist. His handsome face, his eloquent eyes, and his melodious voice combined to make him irresistible; but Maud had a safeguard, which proved of potent power, in her growing interest in Charles Conyers.

"I wish you would rise, Major Darnier. You ought to



know that all this is ridiculous. I can not give you the answer you wish."

"And why? You think I am presumptuous in making this declaration? Perhaps I am; but I could not bear to wait until another had seized the prize I covet. Say that I have some hope, that time may make a change in your feelings, and I will dare any thing for your sake."

"Let this end at once and forever," replied Maud. "I will never marry a man who has not fought under my flag, for the freedom of America; certainly I shall never marry one who has fought against it."

"You give me no hope, then?"

"It is better to end it at once. You will awake to a sense of the hopelessness of the attempt sooner or later—I am surprised that you do not know me better."

"Enough. I *do* understand you, better than you understand yourself, and I will take means to set myself right. You are contrasting me with that rebel hound who has disgraced me, and saying to your own heart that he is a nobler man than I. I say to you, that I will follow him until one or the other lies dead. This adds new fuel to the hate I bear him."

"Do you threaten him in order to frighten me?" she asked, in a contemptuous tone.

"No; I never threaten. I have made this statement, and I intend to keep it to the very letter, as you will find before many weeks. You are one of those who, proud of your beauty, delight in bringing men to your feet, the better to insult them. You will receive bitter payment in the after days.

"I think you have said enough, Major Darnier. Perhaps you had better retire."

"You shall hear me out, proud girl. I come of a race as high above yours as the king's, for the blood of that king flows in my veins."

"I should not think you would boast of that. King George is not famous for his wit, I have heard."

"You will drive me to do something I shall repent. Take care of yourself, for there is a lurking devil in my blood which your cruelty is bringing out. I love you dearly now; beware that you do not turn my love to hate."



Maud had risen, and stood before him with dilated nostrils, looking down at him with a glance which seemed to burn in its intensity. "You drive me to say something I would have kept back for your sake, Major Darnier. You are infinitely the inferior of the man you speak of. As little as I know of him, he seems to me a man of a noble nature, who would not take an ungenerous advantage of an enemy, which you have done already. More than this, he is fighting for a principle, and you for the *pay* of your boasted ancestry, and I am ready to trust his arm to protect himself from injury from you and your fellow-soldiers, if I may dignify them by that noble name."

"Silence, mad girl. You do not know what you are saying or how great an injury you may do yourself if you persist in such language."

"I will bear the blame of any thing I may say or do. Leave the house at once."

"I am not ready yet," he replied. "Do you know that in a day or two Lord Rawdon will leave Camden, and it only needs a word from me to leave this house a mass of blackened ruins? If you care for the home where you have lived so long, do not drive me to say that word."

"Would you do that?"

"More than that if you drive me to do it. I am a man not easily beaten, as you will find to your cost. Change your decision, give me a little hope, for you do not know how your image has haunted me since I first met you."

"I shall never change my decision in your favor, sir; and I order you to leave this house, or I will call the servants and have you turned out like a dog."

"Do it; but, as surely as you speak that word, you doom yourself and all you hold dear; for, as surely as you dare to so degrade me, I will have revenge, and that so deep and bitter that you shall say Ransom Darnier knows how to avenge a 'wrong.'"

His manner awed her in spite of herself. He did not seem to be in a passion, and his voice was not raised above its ordinary tones; yet, in spite of all, there was a solemn earnestness in his manner which convinced her that he meant to make no idle threat, but that she was in danger if she



pushed him further. There was a strange fascination in his eye which kept her silent, looking at him intently. He took two steps and seized her by the wrist, still keeping her under the influence of his eye. The touch seemed to bring back all her courage, for she threw him away with a force which made him stagger.

"Do you dare to lay your hands upon me, sir? Your touch is pollution."

"One thing more," he said. "You care for the life of this blacksmith, it seems; very well, he is a doomed man. When Major Withers and the others are released, he shall die."

"Now, you just come along with me!" said a quiet voice. "I want you, major." Both turned quickly, and saw Blacksmith Tom standing just inside the door, looking at them with a smile.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### IN THE FOREST.

MAJOR DARNIER staggered back as pale as if a bullet had been planted in his bosom, glaring at the imperturbable face of the blacksmith, whom he had left under lock and key in a thickly-walled cellar, with no aperture large enough to allow him to pass through, and a guard before the only door. Yet, there he stood, calm and smiling, holding in one hand a long-barreled pistol, cocked and ready. Ransom Darnier was a brave man, but the unexpected appearance of the prisoner unmanned him.

"You devil," he hissed. "How did you escape?"

"I knew he'd come here!" said Blacksmith Tom, looking at Maud, "and so I followed him. Now, you just come along with me, will you? I don't want any fooling, and you must go back where you came from, and that's Colonel Charley's camp in the woods. No tricks now; you're full of 'em."

"Suppose I refuse to go?"

"We won't s'pose any thing of the kind, my lad," replied the blacksmith, coolly. "'Tain't in the natur' of things for



an unarmed man to face a loaded pistol. It's an hour yet before the guard is relieved, and they won't trouble no one; I took care of that."

"You did not kill them?" said Maud, anxiously.

"Not a bit. I only left 'em in such a way that they can't holler and make a row, until the relief comes. Git ready, major; I want you, and I ain't got any time to spare."

A little space will serve to explain the manner of the blacksmith's escape:

When he was returned to the cellar, after the execution was stopped by the appearance of Dan Malony, the guard was left upon the outside. He kept quiet until night came on, and the sentry admitted Uncle Ben, bringing in supper. The landlord managed to whisper to him to keep quiet and wait for him. Tom ate heartily and winked to his old friend to intimate that he understood him, and that worthy man withdrew, carrying out the dishes. An hour passed on and darkness had fully set in, and Tom had almost made up his mind to move on his own account, when a wine-cask was pushed aside, and Uncle Ben appeared at the opening, beckoning to him to come on. Tom rose cautiously, and Ben helped him through the panel, closing the door, and fitting it in such a way, that even if the cask were moved aside, the closest inspection would not reveal the door. They were now in the cellar in which the secret meeting had been held, on the night before the capture of Darnier's train. The chairs and table were in the same place still. Uncle Ben walked to a small wooden door at the back of the cellar and passed through, followed by Tom. The door, being opened, revealed a subterranean passage extending in the direction of the stables, through which they passed, stooping low to keep their heads from contact with the stone roof. The passage ended abruptly in a flight of steps. Ben went up first, and pushing a sliding hatchway aside showed that they were in the stables attached to the tavern. Blacksmith Tom followed him up, and he closed the hatchway, throwing a quantity of loose straw over it, concealing it from view.

"You needn't be afraid to speak, Tom," he said. "I barred the door on the inside when I came in. Now, you run for it. Take the way across the fields and you are all right."



"Don't hurry me too fast," said Tom, coolly. "We've got plenty of time, I allow. I never hurry myself in times like these. Ain't there some information to be picked up by them that's thrifty?"

"Rawdon marches in the morning, and he means to push Greene to the wall," said Ben.

"Does he? Now I want to tell you something about that man Greene. I like him, and that's a fact. We've got a good many things in common. He is a blacksmith, in the first place, and he ain't going to waste his men, in the next. He suits me; he goes to work as if he had a long job cut out and meant to take his time. That's about what he means to do, and I'll back him to worry this man Rawdon out of the country. Where's that darned cuss, Darnier?"

"Gone up to Carroll's."

"You don't mean to say that the gal cares any thing about Ransom Darnier?" said Tom, aghast.

"Don't you believe it; she's got too good sense."

"That's what I thought. The next thing is, where is my hoss?"

"What? You don't mean to try to get him away?"

"Don't I? If you think I'm going to leave Palmetto in the hands of the Britishers, you are mistaken. He'd break his heart if a red-coat was to ride him, and it can't be did. Where is he?"

"In the other stable."

"Near which door?"

"The back."

"Good enough. Is Major Darnier's hoss any where near him?"

"In the next stable."

"There, old man. I give you credit for keeping your eyes open. Let's go and git them hosses now before we do any more. Have you got the word for the night?"

"It is 'Rawdon'."

"You're a credit to human natur', Uncle Ben, and you have made my escape as easy as that of a terrapin slidin' off a log. Rawdon is the word, eh? Well, you come and help me git them hosses, and then put back to the house, for they may miss you."



"No they won't. I've give up my room to Ginerel Rawdon, and I sleep in the stable. I ain't particular, you know."

There was a sly drollery in his way of saying this, which touched Tom's sense of the ludicrous, and he laughed heartily, taking care to enjoy himself without making much noise. Ben opened the back door and they slipped out into the stable yard, and reached the door of the other stable unobserved. Ben had a key, but that did not suit Blacksmith Tom. He picked up a thick stick and forced off the staple, so that the connivance of the landlord might not be known. The slight noise they made aroused a straggling soldier, and thinking some chicken-stealing was on hand, he came round the corner of the barn, and whispered:

"Chickens?"

"Yes," replied Tom, in the same tone. "Come close and I will tell you."

The soldier thrust forward his head, when Tom fastened on his throat with so fierce a grasp that crying out was a physical impossibility. Ben kept in the background and had not been seen. Feeling a knife tickling his ribs, the soldier gave in, when Tom, by the aid of a small piece of cord which he took from his pocket, gagged him effectually, and bound him with his own belts. This done, he rose and led out the two horses, both of whom behaved well. While Uncle Ben held them, he lifted the bound soldier, and thrust him into the stall which had been occupied by Palmetto, and closed the door.

"Chickens, eh?" growled Uncle Ben, in ireful tones. "You won't steal no chickens this blessed night, and be blamed to you."

"Go back, now," said Tom. "I have the word and can trust myself to escape. You can't help me any more, and I thank you for what you have done. You and I will have many a talk over this when the war is ended, if we are alive. Good-night."

Uncle Ben stole cautiously back to the stable, while Tom, who knew the ground perfectly, led the horses through the fields for some distance, letting down the fences as he went, until he had passed the first line of sentinels. Here he let down a pair of bars, led the animals out into the road, and mounted, riding down the road at a quick pace.



"Who goes there?" cried a stern voice, and the blacksmith drew up with a musket leveled at his breast.

"A friend, with the countersign."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

Matthews bent forward, and gave the word in a low tone.

"The countersign is correct," said the sentry. "You may pass."

Matthews rode on, and soon came upon another picket, who challenged him as before. Tom gave the word and then entered into conversation with the man for a purpose hastily formed. He had determined to take Ransom Darnier a prisoner into camp, and this man and the next in line might give him trouble. He determined to put it out of their power.

"Major Darnier is at Carroll's, is he not?" he said, keeping his face hidden from the picket.

"Yes. There's a mighty pretty girl there and the major has got a big bet that he has her promise to marry him and does marry her, within the year. He bet with Lieutenant-Colonel Burton, of the rifles, before he left Charleston."

"How much was the bet?"

"A thousand guineas, by Jove. It's a big pile to risk on so tricky a thing as a woman. You'd better pass on; it wouldn't do for us to be caught talking."

Matthews turned as if to go away and the picket turned his head. This was the moment for which the blacksmith had waited, and he threw his arm about the neck of the unguarded man, pressing his knuckles against his throat so hard as to stop his wind. There was a desperate struggle for a moment, for the Britisher was a strong man, but he was forced to yield to the giant strength of the stout blacksmith.

"I've got you, my boy. Now keep quiet, do. What's the use of kicking when I've got my claws on your windpipe. There; cool down, my lad, cool down, and take it easy. Offer to cry out and you are dead."

The man was open to persuasion, and suffered himself to be bound and gagged without any further parley. This done, Tom rode on and served the next picket in the same manner. Having bound him, he laid him by the roadside, to be out of



the reach of any stray horsemen who might pass by, and went directly to Carroll's, appearing at the moment when Darnier was using his name in such strong terms, and astonished him by entering. This is the manner in which it came to pass that Darnier was interrupted in his wooing.

"Always, no matter what I am doing, this wretch comes between me and my object," hissed Darnier. "Give me another pistol and let us end it here."

"Not quite so big a fool, mister. Come; I've got your horse ready."

"My horse?"

"Oh yes. I knew you'd rather ride, and I stopped at the stable and brung him. I got mine too. Come, mount, and I'll just tie your feet with your belt. Good-night, Miss Maud. Have you any message for one you know of?"

"Tell him if the enemy leave this section or are driven out of it—as I pray God they may be—I wish he would come and see me again."

"You needn't send him that message," said Tom. "He'd come any way, for it's as much as I could do to keep him away while Rawdon is here. He'd never have charged the picket last night, only he thought he might see you ag'in."

He seized the bridle of the other horse with his left hand and rode away. Darnier never turned his head to look at her, but his eyes burned with a light which boded no good to those who had so disgraced him. The course they took was in the same direction taken by the two Whigs when pursued by him on the night when the Whig colonel met Maud Carroll. Darnier kept his eyes about him and saw that they turned into the same opening in the woods into which Cunningham's men had gone, so many of whom never returned. They passed over the battle-ground in a darkness like that of Egypt, and Darnier was trying to free his feet from the belt in which they were confined, when the Whig stopped and gave utterance to a wild signal-whistle, which sounded with fearful distinctness through the dim arches of the woods. He waited a moment, when the call was answered in the distance in the same way.

"You understand the game of hide-and-seek well," said Darnier, "else we had won this battle long ago."



"All means are fair when a brave people are struggling for their liberties," replied the blacksmith in an impressive tone. "Come on."

He urged his horse forward, still retaining his hold upon the bridle of the other, and slyly laughing at his futile attempts to free his feet, until they reached the brink of a large creek which flowed through the forest upon the borders of a deep swamp. Here Matthews stopped again and uttered the peculiar whistle he had used before.

"All right, me b'y," cried a voice in the rich brogue which there was no mistaking. "Who is it?"

"Blacksmith Tom, with a prisoner," replied that worthy.

"Hurroo!" yelled Dan. "Och, the saints be good t'ye. May ye live till the tail av yer coat beats out your brain, and ye dhrop into your grave."

"All right, Dan. Bring over the flat and help us across I've got horses."

A large flat-boat, which had been concealed in the bushes upon the other side, was pushed out by two men and soon reached the shore. The horse of Tom, used to this mode of transit, walked quietly on board, but the other hung back and had to be almost dragged upon the flat. Dan had a torch which he held up so as to get a view of the face of the prisoner.

"Good-evening to your 'an'r," he said. "It's mighty glad I am to see ye ag'in."

"Don't bother him, Dan. He has got trouble enough without that. Is the colonel in camp?"

"Yes; an' he wur just goin' to start out an' save ye or lose his life."

"The colonel thinks a heap of me," said Tom, "that's a fact. But he don't think no more of me than I do of him. Have you got a handkerchief, major?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I've got to blindfold you and I thought you'd like to have me do it with your own rag. That's the reason. Oh, here it is; hold your head straight or I shall never get it on. Hold up the light, Dan, and let me look. Now we are compact and comfortable. Push off, Dan."



The flat was pushed off and soon landed on the other shore. After half an hour's travel over a rough and tangled way, the bandage was removed and the major found himself in the camp of the Swamp Rangers.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE WAGER LOST.

A WILD shout from the assembled band woke the echoes of that forest home, when they saw who entered with Dan Malony, and a hundred honest hands were outstretched at once, to grasp that of the blacksmith, who returned their greeting warmly.

"Thank ye, boys, thank ye hearty," he said. "It goes to the heart to meet with such a welcome, when I had come so nigh to taking my ticket out. Make way, lads; I want to see the colonel."

The boys looked rather grimly at the major, who had taken French leave on the day of his capture, without the form of giving up his parole. He did not raise his head, but passed sullenly on, paying no heed to the murmurings of the men about him, who were pleased to see him back again.

The camp was a sequestered place in the woods, approached by tangled and devious paths, but, when reached, one of the most beautiful spots the sun ever shone upon. To this place Charles Conyers had fled, when his troop had been broken up in one of Sumter's battles, and recruited them. Dashing out half armed, he had succeeded in arming them by a single bold effort, and since that time had made his name famous all along that border. He was sitting in a rough cabin, which had been set up for his accommodation, and was reading a dispatch just sent in from Greene's army head-quarters, when a rap came at the door, and a man entered with a joyful face.

"What is it?" said Conyers.

"Blacksmith Tom—"



"If they have hung him, these officers are doomed!" cried Conyers, crumpling the dispatch in his hand.

"It is not likely they'll hang him until they catch him again," said the man. "He has just come in with a prisoner, and wants to report."

"Thank God! Have him in at once. I might have known that the dear old fellow would get out somehow. Ah, here he is."

He darted to the door and seized the blacksmith eagerly by the hand.

"Welcome back, old friend. I thank God I see you safe out of your dangers, and back among your friends. We missed you sorely, but I would have had you out of that or slept with you."

"That's friendly," said Tom, turning away his head. "I might have expected as much from you. But, you will want to see my prisoner. Bring him in, Dan."

Dan appeared at the door, ushering in Major Darnier, with the same sullen expression upon his face.

"How did you fall into the hands of our worthy friend the blacksmith?" said Conyers. "Welcome to our forest home, major."

"Ay, scoff at me, devil that you are!" hissed Darnier. "It is your turn now, and Satan do you good with it. He has helped you, time after time; all my plans have recoiled upon my own head and all through you and your satellites. But, I warn you that this can not last forever; my turn must come some day."

"I can not say that I am sorry to see you here, major, yet I would not exult over you. Whatever your reason may have been, you have pursued me with vindictive animosity since the first day we met."

"I could put a flea into your ear with regard to the reason of it," said Tom. "I'll let you know before the day is out. In the mean time, what shall we do with him?"

"Stop," said Darnier, raising his hand. "Rebel and traitor, I will tell you why we hate each other, and you shall tell me if there is a stronger reason under the sun. We love the same woman. You start at that, and would perhaps say that you never spoke of love to Maud Carroll. It may be true, but



you are not the less my rival. We can not breathe the same air as friends; let that be understood."

Conyers smiled slightly, and did not speak for a moment. When he spoke, his voice was very calm, but there was a quiet look in his eyes.

"We will not discuss that subject now," he said. "How I may regard that noble girl, or how she may think of me, is nothing to our common enemies. She is too much in love with the grand cause I follow to think of any other love until the country no longer groans under the tread of hireling feet. Take the major to the guard-house and see him properly secured. I can not give you your parole again, major."

"I do not ask it. I would break it again if you did."

"That has at least the merit of frankness. When you have seen the prisoner safely placed, Tom, come back to me."

Tom was not gone long, and on his return he sat down with the colonel and gave him an account of what had passed since he fell into the hands of the enemy. The colonel listened with attention, and his fine eyes brightened when he heard the message of Maud to him. He began to hope that this sweet girl might learn to love him, and if he survived the struggle for liberty, bless him with her hand. But, he had little time to give to such thoughts, for business of importance was at hand.

"We march at early day, Tom," he said. "A dispatch has just come in from Greene to that effect. See that every thing is ready, and then try to get a little rest before morning."

Major Darnier found a friend in the room of the rude guard-house in which he was confined. This was Walter Biltop, who was boiling over with rage against the "cursed Yankee" who refused to take his parole. He was rather pleased than otherwise to see Darnier. The door was locked, and they were left to themselves.

"We are having bad luck," said the lieutenant. "But, keep quiet, and I will show you that I have been busy. Did you notice where the guard is posted?"

"One at the door and one at the window."

"Just as I thought. Then wait an hour and you shall see."

Darnier said no more, but waited in moody silence for the



development. At that hour of night when every thing seems asleep, Bilton rose and touched his companion. The lieutenant approached the door and looked through the keyhole. The guard stood near by, leaning on his rifle, and humming a low tune, his thoughts far away with the girl he loved.

"This way," whispered Bilton. "I have improved my nights."

He turned his face to the wall, which was formed of rough logs, and managed to climb up to the roof upon the side opposite the door. This roof was of bark, and he had worked at it until he had loosened a broad piece in such a way that by the exertion of a little strength he could force it back and allow him to pass through. Indeed, if Darnier had not come he had intended to make his escape that night. He crept out upon the roof and lay prostrate until Darnier had followed him. Then he approached the eaves cautiously and looked down. The guard was in the same position, and still hummed his low song. Creeping to the other side, they dropped to the ground without noise and waited. They heard no sound, and silence reigned about the camp. Then, crawling like serpents along the ground, they reached the edge of the woods, into which they plunged with a keen sense of relief, and rising, shaped their course by the camp-fire and ran until they reached the bank of the creek. By good fortune they struck it just at the point where the flat-boat lay. They pushed it off and gained the other side.

"I know the way now," cried Darnier, shaking his fist in the direction of the camp, "and God forget me if I do not make sorrow to yonder hell-brood before they have done with me. Come on, Bilton. Both of us will be footsore before we reach the camp."

Their escape was not known until morning, and was borne philosophically by the young colonel.

"What will be, will be, Tom," he said, hearing the report. "The fellow is bound to slip through our fingers somehow. No matter; we have other fish to fry. Prepare to mount; mount. Forward, march!" and the brave band marched away to new scenes of glory.

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Months passed away, and Maud had not heard of either of



her lovers. She had heard rumors of battles fought to the north, of chivalrous deeds by the partisans, and her young lover was the mark of much abuse on the part of the Tories and praise on the part of the Whigs. One night, sitting on the veranda, she was startled by a low cough, and looking up quickly, saw the Yankee who had misled Darnier upon the first unfortunate meeting with that worthy's troops, standing not far away, looking at her with an odd smile.

"Evenin', miss; evenin'," he said, bowing and scraping, "How du y'u du?"

"I am well," she said, looking at him in some astonishment. "Where did you come from, and what do you want here?"

"Wal, that's tew questions tu answer tu onc't. I come from up above, an' I've got a letter fer y'u, I guess. That is, ef yure name is Miss Maud Carroll."

"That is my name. Give me the letter, and rest while I read it."

The Yankee accepted the invitation, and sat shifting his feet uneasily from side to side while she read. The letter was from Charles Conyers, and said that she might expect to see him within two days, as by that time every British soldier would be far below Camden, and he was ordered to march. "I send this by a trusty hand, and hope you will treat him well for my sake," he added, in conclusion. She looked at the Yankee, who grinned broadly, and was about to speak, when the beat of hoofs startled them, and Darnier, with a body of some fifty horse, dashed up to the house before the Yankee had time to draw back out of sight.

"Now by all that is lucky, well met, my worthy Yankee," cried the dragoon. "I hope I see you well. Excuse me, Miss Maud, but we have met before."

"Yaas," said the Yankee, with a broad grin. "I knowed him afore. Heow de du."

"Permit me to ask you a question or two in reference to the manner in which you led my troop into a trap at the time of which you speak," said Darnier. "Come down here."

The Yankee obeyed reluctantly, and Darnier looked at him closely. Where had he seen that stalwart figure, but in a different garb, before this time. A cry escaped him, and bend-



ing forward, he seized the long tow hair of the Yankee firmly and gave a tug. Off came cap and wig, and Blacksmith Tom stood revealed!

"Seize him!" shrieked Darnier. "Quick, or he will escape."

A dozen hands seized the blacksmith, who, seeing the uselessness of making any struggle, stood unmoved among them, answering nothing to their insults, but by his calm look defied them to do their worst.

"Bring a rope here," cried Darnier, when he was secured. "The scoundrel has done his last wickedness on the earth. Drag him under yonder tree and string him up."

"Wait," cried Maud. "Surely you would not be so inhuman."

"Wait a moment," said the major, dismounting. "Keep him until I come out. Miss Maud, I will speak to you within."

He took her hand and led her into the house, while she trembled in dread of what was to come. "I have but one short proposition to make to you," he said. "I shall make it but once. Here are writing materials ready to your hand. Write out a promise to marry me whenever I choose to ask you, and yonder blacksmith shall go free. Refuse, and I will hang him upon the tree under which he stands."

"You could not, you could not."

"Your answer quickly; I have no time to waste in idle words. If you refuse to be my wife, I swear to you that I will make it so that you shall beg me on your knees to marry you. Answer at once."

"I will not marry you, nor would yonder noble man accept the sacrifice at my hands."

"Enough. Come out then, and see him die," cried Darnier, seizing her by the wrist in a fierce clasp. "Ho, there! Up with him!"

The wretches hastened to do his bidding, but while they adjusted the rope about his neck, a voice clear as a bugle cried "Charge!" and with a battle-cry which Darnier's men had often heard before, the Swamp Rangers swept down upon them, riding them under without mercy. In the *melee*, Charles Conyers met Walter Bilton face to face.



**"Now, wretch," he cried, "take your doom."**

Bilton caught the flash of that trenchant saber, and lifted his own to ward off the blow. It was vain. Down he went, cloven to the chin, and over his body rode the Whig leader, shaking his gory blade in air. When the battle was over, and it did not last long, they found Darnier lying wounded just at the foot of a great tree, struck down by a stray bullet. He raised himself feebly and breathed the name of Maud. She came and bent over him.

"I have lost my wager," he gasped. "But, you drove me mad. I think I have my death-wound. Good-by, friends and foes."

With these words he fainted, and they carried him into the house. He lived, but would never be able to take the field again, and was invalided and sent home. They never saw him again, but heard of him in the House of Commons, as a leader in debate, and the strong arm of the Tories.

During the tumult Tom Matthews had slipped away, and no one could find him. Charles took Maud Carroll's hand and walked with her into the parlor. And there, while the men waited, he told her the story old as Adam, yet always new to many, and she did not say him nay, but whispered, that when he had done what he could for the flag, she would be his wife. While they talked, there came a rap at the door and a well-known figure stalked in. It was the man they had known as Gabriel with the sheet thrown over his shoulders.

**"I am Gabriel!" he cried. "I snuff blood in the air."**

"That is masquerading enough, Tom," said the colonel. **"We need hide nothing from her now."**

"Hooray!" cried the stentorian voice of Tom Matthews, as he flung away his sheet and rubbed off the ocher and charcoal from his face. "I'm glad of that. Well, bid her good-by, colonel. I'll step out while you do it, and then let us away to new labors. The end is not yet."

"You have seen two of the many disguises worn by this wonderful man," said Conyers. "Say nothing of what you have seen to any one, for there is still much work to do. And when the war is over, I will come to claim my own."

They kissed and parted—he, to do his work in the battle



before him, and to fight beside Tom Matthews, Dan Malony and the rest, and she to wait and watch for that brighter day when these laureled heroes could come safely home, to bear the honors they had so nobly gained. The deeds of Thomas Matthews have no place in history, and to redeem them from oblivion these chronicles are written.

THE END.



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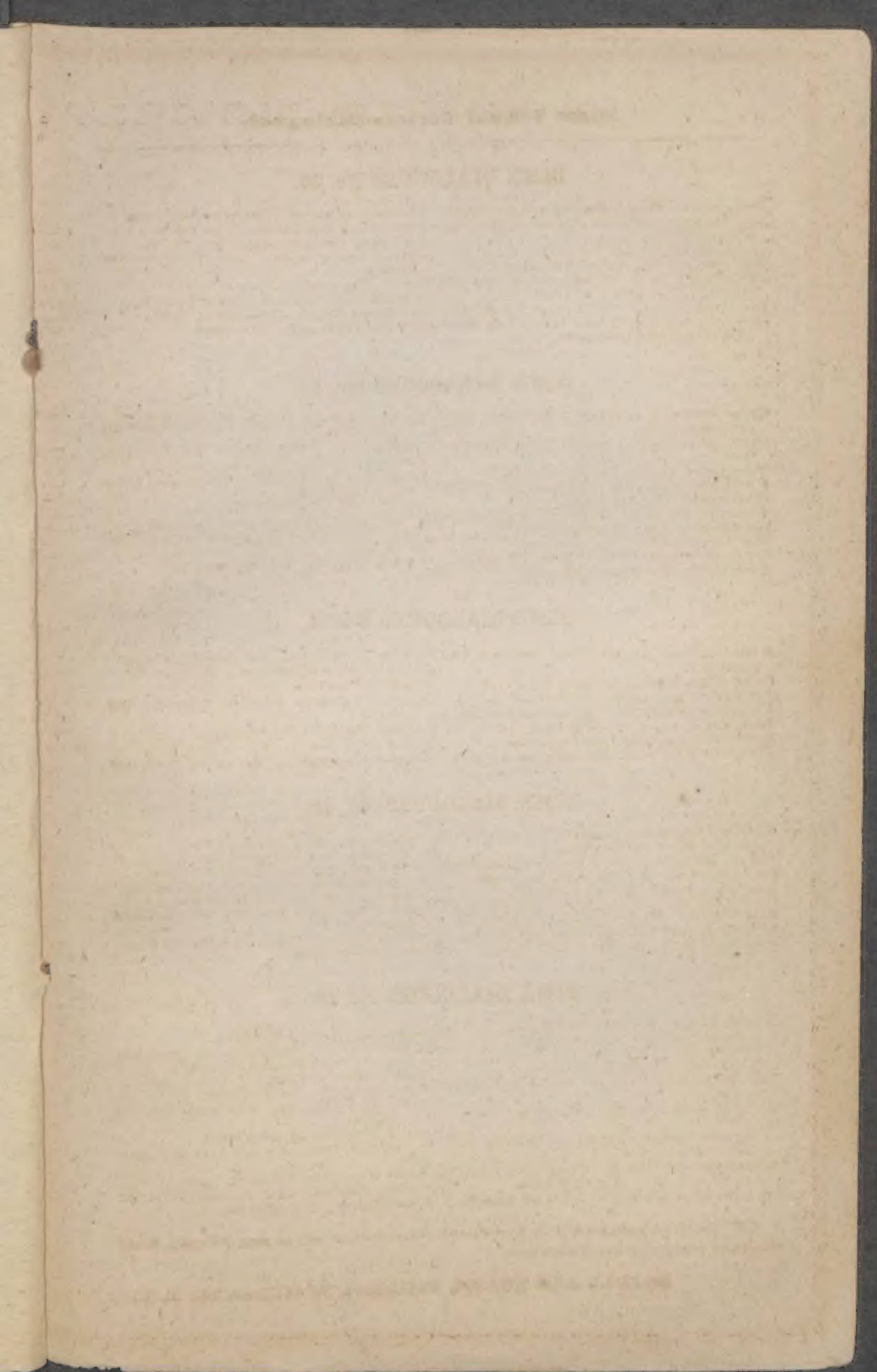
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